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# ICR

## IRISH COMMUNICATIONS REVIEW

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## IRISH COMMUNICATIONS REVIEW

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### Articles

- Combative Critics or Captured Collaborators? Irish Financial Journalism and the End of the Celtic Tiger 5  
*D.Fahy, M. O'Brien and Valerio Poti*
- Irish Press* coverage of the Troubles in the North from 1968 to 1995 21  
*Ray Burke*
- Peering through the Fog: American Newspapers and the Easter Rising 37  
*Robert Smuhl*
- Crossing Boundaries and Early Gleanings of Cultural Replacement in Irish Periodical Culture 50  
*Regina Uí Chollatáin*
- A Protestant Paper for a Protestant People: the *Irish Times* and the southern Ireland minority 65  
*Ian d'Alton*
- Tabloid Sensationalism or Revolutionary Feminism: the first-wave feminist movement in an Irish women's periodical 74  
*Sonja Tiernan*
- 'To Enlighten and Entertain' – Adventure narrative in the *Our Boys* paper 88  
*Michael Flanagan*
- 'Blessed with the faculty of mirthfulness': Arthur Malley, the 'new journalism' and the local press in Sligo at the turn of the twentieth century 103  
*Mark Wehrly*

### Reviews

- Brian O'Neill (ed.), *Digital Radio in Europe: Technologies, Industries and Cultures* 115
- Rosemary Day, *Community Radio in Ireland: Participation and Multiflows of Communication* 115  
*Pat Hannon*

Paschal Preston, *Making the News: journalism and news cultures in contemporary Europe*

117

Nora French

Chris Morash, *History of the Media in Ireland*

120

John Horgan

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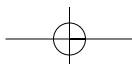
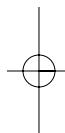
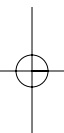
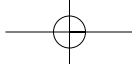
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# INTRODUCTION

THIS ISSUE OF the *Irish Communications Review* is an unusual one, in that most of the contents is devoted to one theme, media history. The majority of articles were developed out of papers presented at the second annual conference of the Newspaper and Periodical History Forum of Ireland, which was held at the School of Media in DIT last November. The Forum was established only two years ago by a group of academics and practitioners who believed media history in Ireland was unjustly a poor relation to other areas of media study.

We have, it seems, already tapped into an unmined seam of original and fascinating research: two successful conferences have already been held, the first at NUI Galway in 2008, and relations developed both with the National Library of Ireland and the Dictionary of National Biography. Our third conference will be held in November next. We are extremely grateful to the editorial board of the ICR for this opportunity for some of the papers delivered to gain a wider audience and hope to continue this fruitful relationship between what we believe is the premier forum for newspaper and periodical history and the main media and communications journal in Ireland.

Michael Foley  
Chair,  
Newspaper and Periodical History Forum of Ireland.



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# FROM BOOM TO BUST: A post-Celtic Tiger analysis of the norms, values and roles of Irish financial journalists

Declan Fahy, Mark O'Brien, Valerio Poti

THE COLLAPSE OF IRELAND'S ECONOMY into its worst recession in modern history has prompted some professional reflection about the roles and responsibilities of the country's financial journalists. Conor Brady, a former editor of the *Irish Times*, asked in a commentary article published in his former paper: 'Was the forming of this crisis reportable earlier? Were emerging trends apparent? Did they [the news media] do as good a job as they might have in flagging the approaching storm?' Brady, editor of the paper between 1986 and 2002, the period corresponding to the rise of the Celtic Tiger economy, concluded that criticisms of the systemic problems in the financial system were articulated by some figures in key positions in Irish society, but were not reported in the news media 'in a form that was sufficiently sustained, coherent and authoritative'. The concerns that did feature in the media were raised primarily by commentators and academics, but only a 'very small minority' of news journalists (Brady, 2010).

Brady's concerns were mirrored internationally. In 2008, an article in the London *Independent* headlined 'Is the media to blame for the credit crisis?' quoted respected *Financial Times* journalist Gillain Tett: 'There are questions to be answered, such as why the media wasn't more of a watchdog, why it didn't raise questions about the rise of easy credit and the way money goes round the world' (Crossley-Holland, 2008). More recently, Andrew Leckey, a former CNBC host and now president of the Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism at Arizona State University, observed that:

In a tremendous boom period, they [financial reporters] covered the boom and people wanted to believe in the boom. They didn't uncover the lies that were told to them. Nobody did. But they should be held to a higher responsibility. (cited in Smith, 2009)

This paper presents an exploratory analysis of Irish financial journalists' views<sup>1</sup> on the reporting of the Celtic Tiger economy and its collapse. It situates their opinions

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<sup>1</sup> The views of journalists were gathered by conducting qualitative, semi-structured interviews with eight current or former financial journalists working for news organisations based in Ireland. The reporters were sampled to ensure variability in type of media organisation (print, broadcast, wire service), length of financial journalism experience, and position in an organisation's editorial hierarchy. The interviewees were granted requested anonymity, on the grounds that full attribution would potentially have harmful career consequences,



and reflections against an analysis of the history of Irish financial journalism, a sociological description of the production of financial news, and a contextualisation of Irish financial reporting within trends and themes of business journalism internationally. It explores journalists' self-reported views of how they conceptualise their professional roles, presents their reflexive critiques of their performance during the Celtic Tiger years, and outlines their views on whether or not the practice of financial journalism has changed post-boom.

The Irish experience provides an illustrative case study for the analysis of financial journalism generally, as the country – an export-led economy that has been exposed to the winds of globalisation – went, over approximately two decades, from spectacular growth to near bankruptcy after the crash in the property market and the near collapse of the Irish banking system.

### **The Development of Irish Financial Journalism**

In terms of the development of financial journalism in Ireland, it is important to note that the appointment of specialist correspondents did not occur until the 1960s. Up until then, newspaper reporters remained anonymous, non-specialised and part of a general newsroom pool. The advent of television, which made news and reporters more visual, contributed, in part, to the appointment of specialist correspondents who were required to develop an expertise in a particular field and to cultivate sources relevant to that field. This gave journalists more autonomy and also made them household names in that they were now associated with particular strands of journalism. Up to the mid-1960s, media coverage of financial matters was relatively limited and consisted of lists of share prices on the Dublin and London stock exchanges, the reports of annual general meetings of companies or a prospectus seeking investment in new or existing companies. As for public economic matters – government economic policy, budgets and taxation – there was plenty of coverage – a reflection of the political nature of such stories.

The economic boom that followed the switch to free trade in the early 1960s changed the nature of business and financial reporting. As the economy took off, media institutions began to devote more resources to covering financial matters. In 1963, the *Irish Times* appointed Nicholas Leonard as its financial editor. He thus became the country's first full-time financial journalist with a brief to produce a daily 'Business and Finance' page for the newspaper. The page, which first appeared 20 May, 1963, consisted of business news, analysis of company performance, Dublin and London stock prices, and critical reviews of company annual reports. As Leonard recalled, company owners and directors did not immediately welcome this new departure:

It is strange to reflect now that in 1963 it was quite commonplace for substantial companies, like John Power, the distillers, and Thomas Dockrell, the builders' providers, to ban reporters from their annual meetings. Maurice

as respondents were frequently critiquing their peers and employers, and that the views were their personal opinions rather than being those of their news organisations. The reporters were overwhelmingly experienced: six of the reporters had been reporting on financial matters for between five and ten years, one for between one and five years, and one for more than ten years. The journalists are identified by the letters A to H. Interviews were conducted in March and April 2010.

Dockrell, the chairman of the latter, used to personally bring me out a glass of sherry after the meeting and graciously inform me that all resolutions had been carried without dissent. (Leonard, 2006: 57)

Nonetheless, the other national dailies followed suit in terms of regular dedicated space for business news that contained critical analysis. Such was the success of this new type of journalism that dedicated financial magazines also began to emerge. The aforementioned Nicholas Leonard was poached from the *Irish Times* by publisher Hugh McLaughlin, who launched the republic's first business magazine, *Business and Finance*, in September 1964. Leonard was hired to edit the new 38-page magazine that described itself as 'A weekly survey of trade, finance and the property market'. In 1968, *Hibernia* magazine was acquired by John Mulcahy, who re-invented it into 'a lively, irreverent and often well-informed magazine which specialised in an eclectic but highly marketable mix of political gossip and features, book reviews, and authoritative business and financial journalism' (Horgan, 2001: 96). *Hibernia*, which ceased publication in 1980, was succeeded by *The Phoenix*, in January 1982; it too carried 'high-grade business and company news stories' (Horgan, 2001: 147).

In the mid-1980s both the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent* moved beyond having a business page to publishing weekly business supplements. In 1989, the financial media landscape was radically altered with the arrival of the *Sunday Business Post*. Part financed by the French company, Groupe Expansion, which published economic magazines and newspapers in Europe, the paper's origins lay with journalists such as Damien Kiberd, former business editor of the *Irish Press* and the *Sunday Tribune*, Frank FitzGibbon, former editor of *Irish Business*, Aileen O'Toole, former editor of *Business and Finance*, and finance reporter James Morrissey (Fallon, 1994). The paper, now owned by the Examiner Group, describes itself as 'Ireland's Financial, Political and Economic Newspaper', has a circulation of approximately 55,000 and is Ireland's only dedicated financial newspaper.

It is important to note that the remit of financial journalism also involves covering the business of media institutions themselves, and indeed the business interests of media owners. It may also cover the businesses and financial interests of prominent advertisers or regular journalistic sources who might feel that, because they provide advertising revenue to media institutions or information to journalists, they are immune to critical analysis. As remembered by Martin FitzGerald, former group business editor of Independent Newspapers, in the 1980s an attitude existed among senior financial figures that they 'owned' the financial pages. Present at a lunch to mark the appointment of a new president of the Irish Stock Exchange, to which all of Dublin's senior financial editors and journalists were invited, FitzGerald (in Bourke, 2008: 61–4) later recalled that:

The lunch went well and all the proprieties were observed, until, during the port, the topic of mutual dependence came up in the conversation. 'What do you mean, mutual?' a rubicund and slightly tipsy broker ventured. 'The business pages are ours. We own them,' he added. On hearing such blasphemy, the Dublin financial press went into a collective quiver. What our hosts seemed to be saying was that we biz hacks shared their preoccupations; we defended their interests and, maybe, we even did their bidding. So, while we

finished the port, we insisted to the new president that we were our own men ... Trudging back to the office, however, I admit an icy feeling was coursing through my veins. Maybe, the chap with the English public school accent was right. He was implying that we were lazy, dependent and largely uncritical. More chillingly still, maybe our employers (who shared the same gentlemen's clubs with the brokers) were happy with such an arrangement.

The same applied to prominent advertisers. As FitzGerald (Bourke, 2008: 61–4) noted,

the commercial viability of virtually all media organisations depends on the smoozing of advertisers. The timid business hack finds himself regularly having to pull or pedal lightly on copy that would otherwise antagonise advertisers.

The same applied to the financial interests of media owners:

behind every organ of media, there is an owner, manager or agent who seeks to protect an interest. When those interests become wide-ranging and extensive, the scope for comment on these and parallel interests of proprietors becomes increasingly restricted (Bourke, 2008: 61–4).

Indeed many companies and state institutions remained suspicious of business journalists. George Lee, RTE's former economic correspondent, began his working life as an economist with the Central Bank, where he witnessed this suspicion at first hand:

The prevailing view was that journalists are not all that bright, never understand what they are told, will twist things to get a story, and should never be trusted. One motto that was repeated again and again in the presence of younger staff was that, when journalists ask questions about bank matters, don't give them any answers and, if you refuse to answer for long enough, they will go away. (Lee, 2002: 68–9)

Up until 2001, RTE was allowed to bring television cameras into Central Bank press conferences only on the condition that microphones were switched off. According to Lee, the Bank was fearful that 'the camera might capture what some executive said in a moment when he or she was unguarded'. After protests, Lee was allowed to interview a Bank executive so as to provide sound for his reports and eventually, but only after RTE had threatened to boycott the press conferences, the Bank allowed its briefings to be filmed with microphones switched on (Lee, 2002: 69). As the years passed, Lee witnessed a more professional attitude towards the media develop within the business community. This was, as he put it,

a response to the fact that everybody is beginning to realise that all this information about economics and budgets is for people. It's not just for economists. And it's not just for tax experts. It's about our society and it impacts on our people. (Lee, 2002: 70)

Nonetheless, banks and financial institutions have remained wary of the media, have had their own interests to protect, and can be secretive and duplicitous. But during the 1990s there were examples of financial journalism that took on power banking institutions. In 1998 RTÉ exposed the National Irish Bank's CMI scheme that allowed customers to apparently move their money to the Isle of Man. In reality the money remained on deposit in their local NIB branches, in an account identified only by a number to prevent the Revenue Commissioners from identifying who owned the money. When a whistleblower brought this information to reporter Charlie Bird's attention, he, along with the station's economic correspondent, George Lee, then cultivated sources within the bank to further their investigation (Lee and Bird, 1998). According to Lee, this working together of general reporters and specialist (financial) reporters was 'a potent mix [that] produced something that really had an impact' (Lee, 2002: 78). Their report on the affair was broadcast in January 1998. Shortly afterwards, the *Sunday Independent's* Liam Collins (a non-financial journalist) received information from a whistle-blower and broke the story of how AIB had 53,000 bogus non-resident accounts holding over £600 million. This revelation eventually led to the Dáil's Public Accounts Committee investigation into the industry-wide practice. In terms of sources, it seems that financial journalism is similar to political journalism. On a day-to-day basis financial journalism relies on official and accredited sources for reaction to and commentary on routine or extraordinary developments, but in terms of exposing wrongdoing and corruption it relies on whistle-blowers.

### Where the National Meets the Global

National and global perspectives have frequently combined in financial journalism, a specialism that has been described as a prominent example of an emerging global journalism that reports the complex connections between economic, political and social issues in different parts of the world. The reporting of the Irish economy has been a demonstration of what Berglez (2008) described as financial journalism's routine linking of nation states and transnational processes, such as the international flows of money and capital, showing how these national and international factors are interconnected and interrelated.

The development of Irish financial journalism mirrored the increased prominence and prestige of business reporting internationally in the past thirty years. Since the 1980s, the specialism has taken over in the UK from political and foreign news as the premier serious news area. In this time, the *Financial Times* replaced the *Times* as the most respected UK elite paper (Davis, 2000). Financial journalism has been viewed as having several strengths, including high standards of professionalism, because of the capability and high-level critical expertise that financial journalists bring to their coverage of events (Parsons, 1989). In the UK, the mainstream financial press expanded in the 1980s and the number of specialist financial publications, including investment magazines and newsletters, grew also, the impetus being the then Conservative government's privatisation programme. The nature of business coverage changed in this time also, as business had to sell itself as well as its products. Business leaders became public figures and some were reported in journalism styles more traditionally associated with the reporting of politicians and celebrities. Tumber (1993) noted that what was interesting in this shift in coverage for business was the way these personality-focused stories were mixed with reports of companies' finan-

cial activities and business ethics. Consequently, readers were more familiar with City culture and scandals inevitably resulted in more prominent media treatment (Tumber, 1993).

The current dominant trend of neo-liberal financial economic theory conceptualises the role of journalism extremely narrowly, viewing financial reporters as little more than conveyor belts of financial data to investors. Most empirical studies from this perspective have analysed the direct cause-and-effect relationship between a news announcement and its effect on prices in financial markets (Ederington and Lee, 1993; Melvin and Xin, 2000; Janssen, 2004; for an approach anchored in communication studies, see Davis, 2005). Largely, these studies neither examined the content of news stories nor addressed the professional values of journalists as watchdogs over elites, who sometimes aimed to recontextualise financial information for non-specialist readers by emphasising financial news' political or social dimensions.

### **Professional Norms, Values and Roles**

The eight journalists interviewed were asked about their perceived readerships and audiences, whether it was appropriate to describe financial journalism as a form of elite to elite media communication, their role and work practices (including constraints and sources), and whether the story presentation and style differed according to where it was to be placed. Even though business journalism has operated within the processes and constraints of news organisations generally, the field has been marked by tensions about the roles and responsibilities of financial journalists. These tensions have been rooted in differing conceptions about the aims and audiences of various publications. Financial media can be generally classified into two types: those aimed exclusively at highly financially literate audiences and those featuring business and economics as part of the package of general interest newspapers or broadcast programmes.

The first type includes publications such as the *Financial Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* and the agencies Bloomberg and Reuters. Financial journalists for specialist publications such as the *Financial Times* have perceived the paper's readers to be educated, informed and relatively financially literate and so have been able to tailor reports to readers' interests and demands. Journalists on the business sections of more mainstream publications have aimed at general, non-specialist, socially-diversified audiences, although their coverage has focused on a portion of their readers as investors and 'city people'. Stories have frequently focused on companies, such as Marks and Spencer or Greencore, known to a wide readership. Journalists on mainstream publications have also tried to make their stories interesting and accessible, which helps explain why company stories around the activities, payment and perceived failings of prominent corporate executives occurred regularly. This chimes with Tumber's suggestion that the news values in business news reflected the 'media's normal preoccupation with the lives of the rich and famous' (1993: 351).

For economic stories, there has been more coverage in specialist media and less in more mainstream media, where these reports usually have needed a personal finance or political angle to increase their news value and consequent chances of publication. As economic policy has been a highly contested topic, economic reporting has contained strong elements of political reporting. A further issue for journalists reporting on economics has been that self-interested parties were sometimes the main

or only sources of relevant economic data and so controlled access to the data for economists and journalists (Doyle, 2006).

News organisations whose financial coverage has been aimed at elite audiences can be analysed effectively using the critical elite theory framework as outlined by Davis (2007: 60) where elites were simultaneously the major sources, targets and recipients of news, and where news was produced and consumed in closed communication networks in which 'the mass of consumer-citizens can be no more than ill-informed spectators'. Davis noted, elsewhere, that business news was heavily source dominated and a

closed circle ... has developed between financial PR practitioners (PRPs), City editors, analysts, institutions and top managements. As a result, journalists covering financial and business news tend to move in small exclusive circles consisting almost exclusively of City sources. (Davis, 2000: 285)

This inter-elite communication was central to sustained political and economic forms of power in society. Parsons noted:

The financial press – the term we shall use to describe economic and business reporting as well as strictly financial coverage – is then a unique interpreter, less of 'mass opinion' than of the views and values of a more limited and narrower elite which comprises the readership of the financial pages. (1989, cited in Davis, 2000: 286)

Tumber, by contrast, observed that the field of business journalism was a more open terrain, containing critical comment on business, although dissent in financial coverage may concern only the alternative ways of managing capitalism, with these alternative discourses becoming more acceptable in an economic crisis. Moreover, dissenting voices might be offered because the media itself needs to be seen as dissenting (Tumber, 1993).

Opinions varied very little among the eight Irish journalists in terms of their perceived audience and readership. Journalist A observed that his readership was comprised of 'well informed general readers with an interest in a wide variety of news ... [and] ... professionals who need information for their work'. Journalist B noted that his readership was 'predominantly ABC1 readers' [professionals, employers, managers and self-employed workers] but also noted that the newspaper tries 'to make some stories appeal to wider audiences, especially through use of more light hearted international features'. Journalist C said the readership were 'financial specialists', but also noted that there was a 'wider audience' for financial news. Journalist D said he believed his audience consisted of 'those within the financial community and those outside it with a particular interest'. Journalist E said four audiences existed: 'companies, regulators, analysts/investment managers and investors'. Similarly, Journalist G said the audience was 'financial market participants – traders, brokers etc'. Journalist F noted that the audience for financial news had changed markedly in recent times:

Traditionally, the audiences for financial journalism were mainly those involved in running their own businesses or senior executives of large compa-

nies, though since the collapse of the economy that widened out and most news consumers will read a financial story.

Likewise, Journalist H said the audience for financial news consisted of ‘a blend of people ... Some are professional investors, others are employees of companies, others are general readers with economic interests in the country, while some are policy makers in the area of economics or business generally.’ In terms of whether financial journalism was concerned primarily with elites – elite sources providing information that journalists used to construct stories aimed at elite audiences – most of the journalists dissented from this view, other than Journalist E, F, and G. Journalist E believed that ‘in general, the business community isn’t interested in communicating with the ordinary public – they want to get their message to investors, regulators and their rivals’.

The other five journalists said that financial journalism was centrally concerned with keeping economic elites in check and ensuring that the wider population was aware of the impact that financial affairs had on their lives. Journalist A said financial journalism ‘aims to hold business people and organisations to account. It also aims to explain events. Take, for example, national accounts and budgets. What happens in these cases has implications for everyone in the country.’ Journalist B mentioned the importance of making people realise the ‘implications of things that have happened’, while Journalist D noted that:

Like any news specialty (i.e. technology, science, politics, sport), in-depth coverage and analysis of that area will be of particular interest to those with a high level of interest [and] knowledge in that area and that audience has an entitlement to that service. That is not to say that when called upon to do so, a good financial journalist can not or will not tell their story in a style and manner that makes it relevant to a general audience.

In terms of roles and work practices, almost all of the journalists interviewed saw the role of the financial journalist as being the same as other reporters who cover a specialist area or beat. Journalist E believed the specialism’s ‘basic role should be the same – to keep the audience regularly informed of developments and act as a form of watchdog for wrongdoing’, while Journalist A said its role was ‘holding business people and organisations to account and explaining complex events to people who are not experts in the field’. Journalist H noted that the roles were very different in that financial journalism is largely:

reporting on private activity that is not automatically open to media scrutiny, like the business of government ... Finance itself is a relationship in the main between the buyers and sellers of assets; the journalist is an intruder into that relationship ... the financial journalist is not paid to consider the wider social consequences of commercial decisions, so hence the financial journalist has to be able to zone in on the strict commercial merits of big decisions.

Some journalists noted that in addition to the usual tensions on all reporting beats – the constant aims of being competitive, fair, accurate, balanced, and avoiding defama-



tion in stories – financial journalists faced particular newsgathering constraints. According to Journalist F, because of the need for regular contact with financial sources, ‘some journalists are reluctant to be critical of companies because they fear they will not get information or access in the future’. Journalist E was more forthright. He believed that some journalists had become ‘far too close to their sources’:

They viewed them as friends and allies and essentially became advocates for them. Their approach was justified editorially because many developers and bankers limited access to such an extent that it became seen to be better to write soft stories about them than to lose access. Extremely soft stories would be run to gain access too – indeed, [developer] Sean Fitzpatrick was a particularly coveted source among some journalists.

A major constraint was access to information. Journalist H noted that ‘company accounts are by definition historical in nature and commercial information is routinely denied to financial journalists by a whole plethora of organisations and individuals’.

Several of the journalists pointed out that they operate under strong legal constraints; they are constrained by stock market regulations concerning the public disclosure of market-sensitive information that affects share prices. Journalist D stated that reporters were conscious of the impact of their stories on share prices. He noted that ‘market behaviour is more often than not influenced by rumours and interpretations of trends so the weight of such consequences is in our minds when reporting potentially incendiary stories’. Journalist B criticised daily financial journalism for being ‘almost entirely press release and stock exchange disclosure based’, but Journalist E observed that the opportunity to undertake investigative financial reporting – of company performance, for example – is limited because of lack of resources.

Moreover, it emerged that the threat of legal action is particularly acute, since they are writing frequently about well-funded companies that could afford expensive litigation. ‘Very often a threat of an injunction is enough to have a story pulled,’ according to Journalist B. Journalist H noted that many legal actions by wealthy individuals or companies are ‘executed purely to stifle genuine inquiry’.

In terms of sources, it emerged that the business/financial community served as the major pool of sources for business news. As Journalist E observed:

The routine sources of information are company results, company announcements, regulatory business e.g. consultations, analyst’s reports and company spokespeople. Company spokespeople often brief for their client, but also against their competitors. Access to CEOs is quite limited, although they can be excellent sources.

The journalists also routinely consulted documentary sources, including material filed with regulatory and statutory bodies, and, as observed by Journalist F, senior journalists have built up a network of senior financial sources and do not rely on company spokespeople as frequently. Most of the journalists, however, mentioned that they are careful to move routinely outside the financial community for sources of information. Two journalists noted that there has often been considerable pressure



from public relations professionals to influence the content of financial news. Disturbingly, Journalist F noted, it was 'well known that some PR companies try to bully journalists by cutting off access or excluding journalists from briefings'.

In terms of the work they produce, all eight interviewees said there existed differences in the treatment of financial stories depending on the intended audience or readership. They all agreed that the style of writing differed for reports written for the news rather than the business pages of a newspaper. Journalist A noted that there existed 'a greater tendency to avoid technical financial terminology outside the business pages', while Journalist F noted that he would have regularly been told to rid his articles of 'jargon and financial terms'. According to Journalist H, such stories tended to more crudely point out who the 'good' and 'bad' guys were in a particular development. According to Journalist E, this process of making stories more readable sometimes caused tension between the news and business desks:

It also brings its own tensions: the news section is generally interested in the most sensational angle on a story, based on their limited knowledge of the field, regardless of accuracy. This generally results in a compromise where the story isn't as precise as a business story but it's in the right ballpark. It is preferable to getting general reporters to write the stories as they lack the understanding of terminology and financial structures that underpin modern capitalism.

These tensions were also noted by Journalist F who observed that it was 'not uncommon for newsdesks to change business copy to make it more 'punter friendly''. Several of the journalists observed that the process of a story transferring from the business to the news pages often involved the story referring to why the report was important to the average citizen. A commonly-used angle was that of consumer or taxpayer impact. Journalist G highlighted stories about mortgage rates or stories that involved a cost to the taxpayer (he referred to the bank bailout and NAMA as examples of such stories) as 'extreme examples' of the general newsworthiness of specialist financial stories. He also noted that big company losses or stories involving well-known businessmen (he instanced Sean Quinn or Dermot Desmond as examples) might also transfer to the general news pages.

### **Changing Conceptions Post-Boom**

The eight journalists interviewed were asked whether financial journalism had been too uncritical during the economic boom, whether it had changed in light of the recession, whether financial stories had more of an impact if they contained a political dimension and whether they felt they could freely criticise the financial sector.

No consensus emerged when they were asked if financial journalists had been sufficiently critical in their coverage of financial institutions' practices and government policy during the Celtic Tiger years. Several journalists believed that an analysis of the published or broadcast reports would demonstrate that journalists 'did not shirk' (Journalist A) their responsibilities, arguing that they performed their role within the constraints of the specialism, and pointing to the pronouncements of high-profile commentators and journalists, such as author and columnist David McWilliams and former RTÉ economics editor, George Lee, as examples of critical journalism. Others

argued that reporting could have been generally more critical and investigative, especially in the coverage of banking and property. According to Journalist E, journalists who covered the banking and property sectors were at times 'too close to their sources' and sometimes became 'advocates' for them, sometimes writing 'soft stories' for fear of losing access, or in an attempt to gain access, to these elite sources. Describing financial journalists, Journalist G observed that:

For the most part they were not critical enough and even those that were in private conversation didn't express those views in their stories. There were some reporters who did criticise policies, but they were in a minority and no matter how vocal they were, there is an argument that no one wanted to hear it.

Some journalists agreed that critical coverage did not receive the prominence in newspapers and broadcasts that it warranted. Journalist H observed that 'business and economic journalists constantly questioned the sustainability of the Celtic Tiger economy, but it was not always given proper foregrounding. Criticism of government policy was rife throughout the period of the boom.' The same journalist noted 'there was too much acceptance' of what the banks said about their commercial property lending, but journalists who covered this sector 'found no outside forces suggesting the problem was as big as it later became'.

Furthermore, journalists felt they had been constrained in their newsgathering by the lack of information provided by financial institutions. Discussing the property boom, Journalist B said there was 'a dearth of publicly verifiable information on the rise in indebtedness'. Likewise, Journalist A noted that there

was no requirement on the main players to publicly declare their financial performance and virtually all of them exploited the rules governing companies with unlimited liability to avoid public scrutiny of their accounts. This was pointed out at the time, repeatedly.

Nonetheless, the annual reports of banks showed the huge reliance on foreign borrowing and high loan to deposit ratios, which may not have received sufficient coverage. Some journalists identified the tensions involved in reporting on business for news organisations that were heavily reliant on advertising revenue from certain organisations. Journalist C noted that:

Much of the mainstream media seems to me to be very conflicted because of their reliance on real-estate and recruitment advertising. That doesn't mean reporters consciously avoid writing bad news stories, but it's hard to run against the tide when everyone is getting rich.

Indeed, the importance of property advertising to media organisations was illustrated in 2006 when the *Irish Times* purchased for €50m the property website myhome.ie, established in 2001 by estate agents Sherry Fitzgerald, the Gunne Group and Douglas Newman Good (RTÉ, 2006). Significantly, Journalist F believed that journalists 'were leaned on by their organisations not to talk down the banks [and the] property market because those organisations have a heavy reliance on property advertising'. In

addition, according to Journalist B, reporters who were critical were excluded from receiving exclusive off-the-record information and were often 'shouted down' by politicians or special interests. The comment by former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern in 2007 in which he wondered why those who were criticising the economy did not 'commit suicide' (RTÉ, 2007) was mentioned in interviews as being symptomatic of this process of marginalisation. Indeed, commentary articles by economists working for universities and research institutes – such as UCD economics professor Morgan Kelly, who predicted the property crash in a 2006 *Irish Times* article (Kelly, 2006) – were viewed to be more critical about the state of the economy than pronouncements from economists working for banks or stockbrokers.

The volume and tone of coverage was linked also to financial journalists' expertise, with Journalist F noting that few journalists had business or economics degrees, and Journalist C adding that the more financially literate journalists were the ones that were the most critical, as relatively few financial journalists 'really understand the numbers and the trends, so there doesn't tend to be much independent thinking'. Notably, two of the most high-profile financial journalists and commentators, Lee and McWilliams, are both economics graduates and worked as economists before becoming journalists.

Significantly, all eight journalists agreed that the type and tone of financial reporting changed when the scale of the global financial crisis and scandals in the Irish banking sector emerged. Journalist A noted that it was 'inevitable that reports on an economic meltdown and corporate malfeasance have their own style and tone. The tone was no different in past scandals and past crises.' Journalist D noted that 'suddenly the stakes became far greater. Banks overtook politicians as sources of scandal and financial news became far more relevant to a general audience.' Interestingly, Journalist G noted that while coverage changed this change suited news outlets, as to such institutions, bad news is good news:

Yes, financial reporters have become much more critical of regulations and regulators as well as those that are seen to be to blame for the crisis. The tone of financial journalism has become angrier – in print, but particularly in broadcast – but this can be partly explained as capturing the mood of the people. Financial journalism has become much more closely read in the last two years, in my opinion – partly as people try to understand what happened, but also because newspapers are pushing financial news more – bad news sells.

Journalist B noted that while business journalists had been critical of certain aspects of the boom before the crash, 'the tone turned negative as the scale of incompetence, at both the regulator and at the banks' executive level, was exposed'. Journalist C noted that 'the economy and business has become the new sport or politics, dominating the front pages. The tone has clearly changed as well.' Coverage, he believed, was now 'far more critical and economists have become the new celebrities'.

Likewise, Journalist F noted that 'reporters have become much quicker to question figures presented by either government or companies and to ask whether the information has been independently audited as accurate'. Journalist H believed that coverage has 'became more critical, more investigative and more sceptical'. Journalists, he believed, have developed 'a healthy scepticism' towards the business com-

munity. However, one journalist – Journalist E – dissented from this new ‘healthy scepticism’ belief. He noted that ‘most of the top bankers are gone, the regulator is gone but the financial journalists who so woefully reported their sectors remain in place. And they still aren’t holding industry to account.’

On whether financial stories had a bigger impact if they contained a strong political dimension, seven of the eight journalists believed this to be so. Journalist A believed that the statement was ‘self-evidently true’, while Journalist B noted that such stories received more pick-up from other media and generated a stronger feedback from the general public. Journalist H noted that ‘editors tend to prefer business stories that link into the political system and promote those kinds of stories accordingly’. He also noted that ‘stories about the nexus of business and politics are the favourites of news editors and radio producers’.

This theme was also picked up on by Journalist G who noted that, since people are more familiar with politics and know how it affects them, it is likely that a politicised story will have a bigger impact. More directly, Journalist D observed that elected representatives who were also stakeholders in a financial story should ‘be subjected to a higher level of scrutiny than would be applied to an average citizen’. Journalist C was more cautious. Noting that corporate coverage had a political dimension ‘given the state’s new role in the banking system’, he said that ‘shoehorning a political angle into a business story for its own sake is pointless’.

On whether financial journalists can be critical of the financial system, all eight journalists agreed that they could be, though many questioned the degree to which critical analysis had been or could be carried out. Journalist A noted that comment pieces – rather than straight reporting – allowed journalists to be critical, while Journalist B observed that journalists could be critical ‘by writing about the bonus culture that fuels short-termism, by challenging broker recommendations, by pointing out conflicts of interest and by having the courage to take a stand on certain issues’. Journalist C noted that journalists should be ‘questioning’, but queried what he saw as the increasingly blurred lines between reporting and commentating. But some of the journalists also questioned whether financial journalists had been sufficiently critical during the boom years. According to Journalist E:

The problems that we have seen in Irish financial journalism in recent years have been due largely to its unquestioning support for the elite consensus. There have been critical financial journalists but they have largely been marginalised by their profession. For instance, during the property boom, the journalists shouldn’t have been just reporting what the developers said, they should have been asking ‘where’s the demand for all these houses?’ and ‘how do you propose servicing your debt?’

Journalist F expressed similar sentiments:

It is the most basic duty of any reporter to question individuals, facts and figures. During the boom years very few reporters asked critical questions for fear their access would be denied by PR people or [they] didn’t have the knowledge to ask detailed and probing questions. That has changed and, if anything, most reporters now distrust everything they are told.

Journalist D observed a similar theme:

I think the financial system is little different to the political system. There is little space for in-depth questioning and analysis in a sound bite driven, conveyor-belt news environment. But granting specialist journalists greater time and space to develop knowledge and opinions that they think can contribute to debate on reform will always keep those in power on their toes.

Journalist G also expressed such sentiments:

Reporters operate within that system and within [or] on the fringes or certain circles of knowledge. If they are overly critical of those within those circles, they can lose out on access to that knowledge and therefore they lose stories. They have to tread a fine line and, generally, I think they tread too cautiously and don't criticise enough.

Nonetheless, Journalist H noted that:

The most blistering criticisms of the financial system come from financial journalists, not general news reporters or general commentators. A slew of books, written by financial journalists, have been published in Ireland and the US heavily criticising the financial system.

### Discussion

The historical tensions in the development of Irish financial journalism have continued to manifest themselves in contemporary business reporting. Such tensions mainly concern journalistic access to sensitive financial information and the degree to which financial reporters have been 'captured' (Davis, 2000: 286) by their sources, as argued by elite-elite communication theory. These professional tensions and conflicts emerged in the sometimes contradictory interview responses given by the journalists. They largely disagreed that they were part of elite-elite communication networks, but generally noted that their sources were largely drawn from the broad financial community, which in turn comprised a large part of their audience. This tension appeared to a lesser degree in comments concerning the roles of journalists working for news organisations whose content was aimed primarily at general readers, although these journalists did draw as heavily on sources from the financial community. Moreover, the responses indicated that the tendency for financial journalists to operate within elite-elite networks was more pronounced during the Celtic Tiger years, as the lack of criticism from regulatory, economic or policy sources contributed to the lack of sustained criticism in news coverage. This tension was intensified by the fact that the wider financial system in which they have been embedded conceptualised their role so narrowly, and has frequently made access to information so difficult, thereby making systemic criticism more difficult.

Yet the journalists stated that they consistently sought to avoid being enclosed completely within these networks. They stated that while they covered events and announcements concerning the financial community, they tried routinely to use non-specialist financial sources to broaden the scope of their coverage. They also stated that

they endeavoured to adopt a critical stance in their reports. The extent to which journalists were part of elite-elite networks depended on the intended audience for that information, with different audiences for financial information existing often within the same newspaper. Content on the financial pages was aimed primarily at the financial community, while business articles published on the news pages were often recontextualised by news editors, to make them more relevant to more general readers.

The self-reported views of Irish financial journalists as outlined here suggests that such tensions have continued to be inherent in the specialist role itself and were not something that could be overcome or completely resolved. The tensions were constantly negotiated by reporters in their routine journalistic practice. As the history of Irish financial journalism demonstrated, the most high-profile examples of critical financial journalism occurred where the events had a large political dimension, giving the stories wider impact and allowing the stories to feature a wider range of sources. A key theme in the analysis was the marginalisation during the Celtic Tiger years of dissenting voices, which did not receive sustained prominence in coverage. This conforms with the observation by economist J.K. Galbraith who, in his *A Short History of Financial Euphoria* (1990), wrote that journalists, and others, who speak out during a time of collective euphoria about economic growth 'will be the exception to a very broad and binding rule' in which personal interest, public pressure and 'seemingly superior financial opinion' – such as the lax Irish regulatory regime – conspired to sustain the euphoric belief (1990 cited in Tambini, 2008).

This study found, significantly, that once the scale of the interconnected global economic crises became clear, the tone and style of reporting became dramatically more critical. Marginalised voices suddenly became mainstream. The economic collapse and the strengthening of the regulatory regime seemed, as in a political crisis, to empower journalists to be more critical in their attitudes to sources' credibility and the intensification of their traditional, sceptical, watchdog role. As this study examined only journalists' views, further research would explore the relationship between journalistic output and the personal attitudes of Irish financial journalists towards different economic systems. A further study might also examine longitudinally media content, to investigate the degree to which critical coverage, however defined, was evident, pre- and post-boom. The journalists interviewed for this study agreed overwhelmingly that there was a new mode of post-Celtic Tiger financial journalism, marked by increased criticality and scepticism. But an interesting further area of research could explore whether this stance continues to be maintained when, and if, the economy recovers.

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# THE *IRISH PRESS* COVERAGE OF THE TROUBLES IN THE NORTH FROM 1968 TO 1995

Ray Burke

## Introduction

THE 'IRISH PRESS' WAS THE second-highest-selling daily newspaper on the island of Ireland at the beginning of the era that became known as the Troubles. With an average daily sale of nearly 103,000 copies during the second half of 1968, it had almost double the circulation of the *Irish Times* and the *Belfast News Letter* and it was outsold only by the perennially best-selling *Irish Independent*.

The *Irish Press* had at that time a number of specific characteristics and moments in its prior history that distinguished it from the other national newspapers and that might have been expected to influence its coverage of the Troubles over the following 25 years: (a) it was the only daily newspaper to have been established in Ireland since the foundation of the State and its success assisted its founder, the anti-Treaty and anti-Partition Eamon de Valera, to attain and repeatedly to retain power; (b) it was solidly if not symbiotically linked to Fianna Fáil, which was also founded by Eamon de Valera and which had governed the State for most of the 20th century while becoming the largest political party on the island and thereby effectively overturning the result of the Civil War; (c) in the middle of the second World War, when almost every other country in Europe was either occupied by foreign armies or was being blitzed by enemy aircraft – and when six million European Jews were either in or *en route* to Nazi death camps – an *Irish Press* editorial entitled 'Rights of Minorities' declared: 'There is no kind of oppression visited on any minority in Europe which the Six County Nationalists have not also endured' (*Irish Press*, 1 April 1943); (d) two former chiefs of staff of the IRA were among the many former members of that organisation employed as journalists on the paper in its short, 36-year pre-Troubles history; (e) it had been accused in the Dáil within the previous decade of 'glorifying the gun' in the quest for Irish reunification (Dáil Éireann, 1958); (f) it banned the words 'Northern Ireland' from its pages and instead persisted in using the term 'Six Counties' decades after the government announced the official phasing out of that term in 1957 (O'Brien, 2001: 105); (g) its editor, Tim Pat Coogan, was midway through writing a book on the IRA which would become one of two standard histories of that secret army over the next 20 years.

Even more potentially-compromising was the fact that Eamon de Valera was still the head of state in the Republic, where he was seen by many people as the main instigator of the Civil War following his refusal to accept the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which copper-fastened partition and which established Northern Ireland as a separate political entity. De Valera was also the chief creator of the Constitution, which



since 1937 had proclaimed that 'the national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland' and that the 'reintegration' of the national territory was 'pending'. (Interestingly, de Valera's two immediate successors as President of Ireland were former *Irish Press* employees, Erskine Childers and Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, both of whom were nominated for that post by Fianna Fáil.)

The *Irish Press* political correspondent from 1964 to 1984, Michael Mills, who subsequently became the Republic's first Ombudsman, has recalled that he was not allowed to work for the paper in Leinster House for seven years in the late 1950s and early 1960s because on his debut as a Dáil reporter he had corrected an obvious contradiction in a double-negative uttered by de Valera in a Dáil speech on Northern Ireland in order to make the speech comprehensible. Mills said that he was told very firmly by his bosses when they carpeted him on his return to Burgh Quay that 'Mr de Valera does not contradict himself' (Mills, 2007).

Tim Pat Coogan, who was editor of the *Irish Press* from the beginning of 1968 until August 1987, has said that he felt a 'responsibility to use the educational potential of the paper' to inform readers about events in Northern Ireland (Moran et al, 1984). He also said that when he took over the job 'Belfast scarcely showed up on Dublin's radar screen' and that in 1968 'Northern Ireland was hardly the topic *du jour*' (Coogan, 2008: 170).

Notwithstanding its inheritances, however, the *Irish Press* coverage of the Troubles in the month when they erupted, October 1968, was almost identical to that of its Dublin rivals. The newspaper was also preoccupied that month with the Fianna Fáil government's second unsuccessful attempt in less than a decade to amend the Constitution by a referendum to abolish proportional representation in the electoral system.

The month of October 1968 had four Sundays, leaving 27 days on which national dailies appeared. Northern Ireland provided the lead story on 13 of those days in the *Irish Press*, compared to 12 in the *Irish Times* and 16 days in the *Irish Independent*; it made the front page elsewhere on nine other days in the *Press*, compared to 11 in the *Irish Times* and eight other days in the *Independent*; and the North was not mentioned at all on the front page of the *Irish Press* on five days, compared to four days in the *Irish Times* and three days in the *Independent*.

### The World Takes Notice

The Troubles erupted on Saturday 5 October, when RUC policemen baton-charged a Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association march in Derry that had been controversially banned by the Stormont government's Minister for Home Affairs, William Craig. The *Irish Press* on Monday morning, 7 October, devoted its entire front page and most of page 5 to the riots. Its front-page headline, 'DERRY EXPLODES AGAIN', referring to the rioting on Sunday as well as Saturday, was bigger and bolder than those of its Dublin rivals and the front page photograph was also bigger. The editorial was also devoted entirely to the events in Derry and it ran from the top to the bottom of the leader page. It noted that reports on the weekend's events would be on the desks of the prime ministers and home secretaries in London and Belfast that morning and it added: 'Tragically both reports will omit to mention that it was Irishman who clubbed Irishman.'

The editorial continued:

[William Craig's] defence of the unfortunate police who were driven into action must have rung hollow in the ears of those who had watched the televising of the scenes and who had been present. He was at a hopeless disadvantage in defending his action. The communications media have sped the story around the world ... Whether or not there was a certain amount of provocation from the Civil Rights protesters, the fact remains that Mr Craig was himself the inspiration of it. It will be little comfort to him on this Monday morning that he has done so much to bring the injustices of his regime to the notice of the world. (*Irish Press*, 7 October 1968)

The first violent deaths occurred in August 1969 following the deployment of British troops on the streets. 'SIEGE OF DERRY 1969', said the large bold headline at the top of page 1 of the *Irish Press* of 13 August over a huge photograph by Colman Doyle of a policeman with a riot shield running past a burning armoured car. The heading and picture filled more than the top half of the page and the rest of the page was filled with reports from Derry on how 91 police and 21 civilians were taken to hospital after teargas was used in 'the most serious challenge to the Stormont regime since the establishment of the 6 Counties'. What became known as the battle of the Bogside was covered on three further pages inside, including a full page of pictures, and in a lengthy editorial.

This became the template for the paper's coverage of the Troubles: a huge heading and photograph filling page one to below the fold, three or more full pages of reports and pictures inside followed by a substantial editorial, often running the full length of the leader page. The editorials invariably condemned the violence, lamented the deaths and called for the abolition of the Stormont regime and the involvement of Dublin, London and Belfast politicians in talks on a lasting settlement. The 13 August leader was typical of the style. Headlined 'Fate of the North: When will it all end?' it included the following:

Must a holocaust always precede a measure of goodwill – a measure of give and take? It is hard to countenance a predominantly Christian country allowing the sores of the North to fester any further. The politicians in London, Dublin and Belfast know full well where the root of the trouble lies. It's a problem which Belfast, Dublin and London have a vested interest in solving ... The time is *now*. Tomorrow may be too late and too bloody. (*Irish Press*, 13 August 1969)

That night Taoiseach Jack Lynch went to the RTÉ studios in Dublin to make what the following morning's *Irish Press* front page lead story called 'the most momentous TV and radio broadcast in Irish history'. This was the oft-misquoted speech in which Lynch said that the Irish government could no longer stand and watch innocent people injured. The *Irish Press* accurately reported Lynch's words: 'It is clear, also, that the Irish government can no longer stand by and see innocent people injured and, perhaps, worse.' However, its front page heading, 'LYNCH: WE CAN NO LONGER STAND ASIDE', paraphrased Lynch, as did the opening sentence below, 'The Taoiseach, Mr Lynch, last night announced that the government could no longer stand aside from the tragic events in the North' (*Irish Press*, 14 August 1969).

This perhaps contributed to the subsequent widespread rewriting of the Taoiseach's remarks to insert the word 'idly' into his sentence about the government standing by.

The editorial praised Lynch and again called on the Stormont government to go. It said: 'It is not a government of the people, but government by a rump, for a rump and of a rump of sectarian development.' It continued:

The events of Bogside have made this clear. History has turned a wheel and today's siege of Derry's Catholics looks like being as momentous for the future development of the North as the siege of 1690 was for their Catholic forebears. A vein of history is running out before our eyes. (*Irish Press*, 14 August 1969)

The next day's issue followed the template with its big, bold two-deck front page headline 'MANY DEAD IN BELFAST, ARMAGH SHOOTINGS' over a huge picture of petrol bombs exploding beside armoured cars. The leading article, headlined 'The North Blows Up', said that the newly-deployed British soldiers were not going to cement friendships by 'walking the streets of Derry with drawn guns'. It went on:

Even though the appearance of British troops in the Bogside area achieved a temporary lull in the overall situation, we must face the fact that they have also shown up the inability of the Stormont regime to maintain order ... what the British troops have done in real terms is not to quell an uproarious Bogside citizenry but to prevent alleged instruments of the law, to wit, the B Specials and the RUC, from falling on the people of the area with boot and baton. Unacceptable as they are in the larger context of the partition issue, the British troops have shown that British law and British justice can only be maintained in Northern Ireland by the aid of British weapons. (*Irish Press*, 15 August 1969)

The next day's front page included a picture captioned 'a group a British soldiers playing football with locals just off the Falls Road yesterday', but on an inside page the paper carried the first statement from the IRA in what the report called 'the present troubles in the 6 Counties'. The report said that

the Army Council of the illegal Irish Republican Army in a statement last night over the name of Cathal Goulding, Chief of Staff, claimed that a number of fully-equipped units were already in the 6 Counties to be used in a defensive capacity. (*Irish Press*, 16 August 1969)

The IRA split over how to react to events in the North was reported in a single column front page report on 29 December 1969. The report quoted from a Provisionals' statement which claimed that 'the basic military role of the Irish Republican Army' had been undermined in recent years by an obsession with parliamentary politics and that

the failure to provide the maximum defence possible of our own people in Belfast and other parts of the 6 Counties against the forces of British impe-

rialism last August is ample evidence of this neglect. (*Irish Press*, 29 December 1969)

The paper did not comment editorially on the IRA split, but it devoted a full leader that day to the death of Dan Breen, the IRA man who had fired the first fatal shots in the War of Independence in 1919. Much of page 7 was covered by pictures, tributes and profiles of Breen and the editorial described him as 'a legend' and 'a name which will not be, and should not be, forgotten' (*Irish Press*, 29 December 1969).

Confirmation of the IRA split made the off-lead on page 1 of the *Irish Press* on 12 January 1970. That day's editorial condemned Sinn Féin for being 'dogmatic and intolerant' as well as 'secretive and anti-democratic'. It said that Sinn Féin had been rejected by the electorate and it continued:

Strangely, however, in the welter of new social and economic commitments, the primary objective of reunification appears to have become rather submerged and, indeed, it may be that the splinter group calling itself the Provisional Army Council will take up in the North where the Goulding-led group have left off. (*Irish Press*, 12 January 1970)

Less than six months after the IRA split, the Taoiseach was the guest of honour at the launch in Dublin of Tim Pat Coogan's book on the IRA. The following morning's *Irish Press* reported that the book's English publisher had already sold out the initial print run. It described the book as a history of 'The Movement' – in inverted commas and initial capital letters. A prominent and favourable review appeared on the following Saturday's books page, under the punning heading 'Gael Force'. (*Irish Press*, 25 June 1970)

### Internment

One year later, and two years on from the Battle of the Bogside, a new phase of the Troubles began with the introduction of internment without trial. 'NORTH'S NIGHT OF HORROR', said the big bold headline on the front page on 10 August 1971, under a strap that read 'Violence and terror follow internment'. The lead story said that at least 13 people had died in the worst violence since August 1969. The lengthy leader had a single word headline, 'Bungling'. It said that if internment was not a prelude to the abolition of Stormont and the start of constitutional talks, 'then it was a piece of criminal weakness intended to appease the Unionist right-wing and it will bring upon the Unionist and the British much the same judgment which followed the appeasement at Munich'. The editorial went on:

The British Army came into the North in the wake of the Bogside and Belfast rioting of 1969 to be met with cups of tea. Their behaviour subsequently, and the ineptitude of their political mentors, have turned those cups of tea into nail bombs ...

In the wake of 1969 the IRA split because it had become so enmeshed in silly, eyes-elsewhere, socialist policies, that it was unable to defend the Catholics of Belfast when the Orange mobs struck. (*Irish Press*, 10 August 1971)

The editorial said that the Provisional IRA had taken on the role of protector of the Catholic population, partly because of its own 'ruthless daring and efficiency' and partly because the British Army had from the start conferred upon the Provisional IRA a bogeyman status, and a strength which it did not possess. It added:

High, lower and middle class today place as much credence almost in the Provisional IRA as did the population of this island in their predecessors during the Tan war. (*Irish Press*, 10 August 1971)

The escalation in violence during 1971 resulted in 174 deaths, a seven-fold increase on the previous year's 25. The *Irish Press* began 1972 with a New Year's Day editorial that was extraordinary even by the standards of its own frequent, lengthy leaders on the Troubles, or 'lengthy musings' as Tim Pat Coogan (2008: 187) would himself later describe them. Spread across four columns, instead of the customary two, and running almost the entire length of the page, it carried a two-deck headline 'Civil War: Prospect and Retrospect' and began by marking the 50th anniversary of the Civil War and adding: 'We know its consequences. Let us hope that from them we can learn how to prevent the Northern issue engulfing us all again in the same way' (*Irish Press*, 1 January 1972).

Noting that the post-Civil War generations in the Republic had known only peace while hoping that 'the Border issue' had died away while they remained in ignorance of 'the daily misery of a statelet which had law but not justice for its minority', it went on:

We are no longer in a peace-time situation. This tiny island is now one of the world's trouble spots. We are portrayed, not in terms of tourism, the scenery and economic growth, but through the eyes of the world's war correspondents who now rate Belfast a more war-torn city than Saigon.

It added: 'Attempting a settlement without dealing with the IRA would be like America ending the Vietnam war without reference to the Viet Cong' (*Irish Press*, 1 January 1972).

That leader, Tim Pat Coogan recalled nearly 40 years later, 'summed up my attitude over the whole period of conflict' (2008: 187). On the same day as that editorial the *Irish Press* carried on page 3 a report on the tributes that were being paid to a member of the IRA GHQ staff who had been killed in an explosion in his own workshop in Dublin two days previously. His funeral was covered on the following Monday with a front page picture of four men firing a volley of shots at his graveside and a three column report on page 4 (*Irish Press*, 3 January 1972).

### **Bloody 1972**

The year 1972 would turn out to be the bloodiest single year of the Troubles, with the number of people killed almost trebling from the previous year to 470. The worst days were when the British army killed 13 people in Derry in January and when the Provisionals killed 11 people in Belfast in July. Reaction to Bloody Sunday in Derry dominated the *Irish Press* front page and editorial page for weeks. It produced the front page lead and a leading article on all but four of the 24 publication days that

followed it and on two of those four days it was the Fianna Fáil Árd Fheis that supplanted it as front page lead. 'DERRY MASSACRE' was the front page headline on the morning after the killings, under a strap that said '13 killed, 17 wounded in city of terror' (*Irish Press*, 31 January 1972). The large front-page picture, destined to become an iconic image of the day, was of future bishop Edward Daly waving a blood-stained handkerchief as he tried to lead a group carrying a wounded man to an ambulance. A full page of photographs inside was headlined 'The Rape of Derry'.

The leading article, headlined 'Another Bloody Sunday' branded the Unionist government as 'war criminals' for encouraging the British army to suppress the insurrection in Derry ruthlessly. It said:

Innocent Irish blood has been recklessly spilt in the cause of a Unionist stability which does not exist, never existed and never will exist ... they (the Unionists) have had more blood, they will want more blood, but the last thing they will ever do is to crush Derry.

If there was an able-bodied man with Republican sympathies within the Derry area who was not in the IRA before yesterday's butchery, there will be none tonight. If the wildest Republican sat up for a week to devise ways and means of recruiting the entire Northern minority and a good few in the South, he could not have come up with a more effective scheme than the one which the British implemented yesterday. (*Irish Press*, 31 January 1972)

The editorials over the following days were equally emotive, reflecting the mood in the Republic where tens of thousands of people left their workplaces and colleges to march on the streets. The February 1 leader, headlined 'United in Mourning', ran the full length of the page and it observed that 'never has the Northern minority's cause received such widespread support in the South'. Adding that 'all the world now knows that the Paratroopers' maroon beret is not a symbol of a peacekeeping force, but an emblem of brutality and violence', the leader called for a united effort 'at every level, constitutional and otherwise' to end the Stormont regime and get British troops withdrawn (*Irish Press*, 1 February 1972).

The following day's leader was even more emotive and its references to the Northern minority drifted from third person plural pronouns to first person plural. Headlined 'The unrepentant and the doomed', it said:

Let no one make any mistake about it, the current political realities make more casualties inevitable and we say this with the same sinking feeling of sad inevitability with which we have been accurately predicting the course of events ... there is still a regrettably long hard struggle ahead to convince the Tory leadership of the basic injustice of their cause and the basic rightness of ours. That struggle is the one we must concentrate on ... Britain knows that neither the world nor the Irish are going to allow her to get away with any more Irish Sharpevilles. (*Irish Press*, 2 February 1972)

Bloody Friday in Belfast, within six months of Bloody Sunday in Derry, was described on the front page of the *Irish Press* as 'a savage bomb blitz which killed 11

people, injured 130 and virtually devastated the centre of Belfast'. The Provisionals' claim of responsibility was noted on the page one strap heading. The editorial was headlined 'Chain of Madness'. It said:

An intensification of the (bombing) campaign was forecast in yesterday's *Irish Press*, but it was expected that it would be directed against the British army, military and possibly economic targets, not callously against the civilian population ... the parties who either directly or indirectly contributed to yesterday's carnage should have tested their belief in their aims and methods by helping the ambulance men in Belfast yesterday to shovel dismembered bodies into polythene sacks, and with that blood on their hands as well as their consciences, have gone to grieving widows and orphans and explained how this carnage was the only way to bring about their objectives.

The people of Ireland, North and South, desire an immediate end to the round of killings, maimings, destruction, and this can only come about by getting round the conference table ... It is to be profoundly hoped that out of the shock of yesterday's events may come the impetus to start the talks which alone can save Ireland from what could be the darkest period of her troubled history. Let us hope that it is not too late. (*Irish Press*, 22 July 1972)

The paper's editorial when the Stormont parliament was 'prorogued' in late March 1972, between Bloody Sunday and Bloody Friday, said that while Stormont was 'gone forever', direct rule from London was not an end in itself, but a means to an end and, it hoped, an end to the killings. But it added that, however the deal was wrapped up it 'means the introduction of direct rule by the United Kingdom over part of this country' (*Irish Press*, 25 March 1972).

### Ambivalence

Editorial sentiments like those appeared at a time when *Irish Press* coverage of the Troubles regularly had to share page space with prominent and deferential coverage of former IRA men at the time of their deaths or the anniversaries of their deaths. As many of these men were national heroes or State founding fathers and as most of them were linked to Fianna Fáil, the paper paid them due homage while condemning elsewhere on its pages the daily violence of the Provisional IRA, which claimed a direct link to them. Added to this strange juxtaposition of reverence for the old IRA and condemnation of the contemporary one – already noted above at the time of Dan Breen's death – was the use of the paper's staff, passively or actively, as a conduit for information about the Provisional IRA in what had become a propaganda war as well as a real war.

The dichotomy was evident in the days before and after Bloody Friday in Belfast. Just four days before the outrage, the paper devoted nearly a full page to an exclusive and exhaustive insiders' account of a secret meeting in London a few days earlier between Britain's Secretary of State for the North, William Whitelaw, and the entire leadership of the Provisional IRA, including the hitherto unheralded Gerry Adams, who was flown by the RAF to London from the H Blocks where he was interned. The report, trumpeted in a strap across the top of the front page, was prac-



tically a verbatim account of the meeting and was, in the words of the reporter who wrote it, 'confirmed to me by a high-ranking member of the Republican Movement' (*Irish Press*, 17 July 1972).

And two days after Bloody Friday, while the paper led its front page with a report on emergency weekend talks about the North at Chequers, it also carried on its front page a picture across five columns of President de Valera emerging from a mass marking the 50th anniversary of the violent death during the Civil War of IRA leader Cathal Brugha, who was described in the caption simply as 'the patriot Cathal Brugha'. Page 3 carried a report on the mass, which it said was organised by the 'Dublin Brigade of the IRA'. The report also noted that the Taoiseach was represented at the mass by Major Vivion de Valera TD, a son of the founder (*Irish Press*, 24 July 1972).

Ambivalence arising from these regular reminders of the valour of the old IRA persisted for most of the first decade of the Troubles. In the month of August 1975, events in the North merited front page coverage on 25 of the 26 publication days and on 13 of those days they made the front-page lead. The only exception was 30 August, when the entire front page and all of pages 3, 4, 5 and 10, as well as a further 11-page supplement, were devoted to the death of Eamon de Valera. The pages were replete with articles and pictures recalling de Valera's role in the 1916 Rising and the War of Independence, including a 1921 remark by him about partition, when he told the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis: 'There is no difficulty finding the boundaries of Ireland. The Almighty marked them forever in the Atlantic' (*Irish Press*, 30 August 1975). The main story on the Troubles that day was relegated to page 7 and the editorial, filling half of page 10, made only one passing reference to the North, claiming that without de Valera 'the re-unification of the country...could have been discarded'.

Official unease over perceived equivocation about violence on the pages of the *Irish Press* came to a head just over a year after de Valera's death, when the IRA murdered the British Ambassador to Ireland, Christopher Ewart-Biggs, near his residence in Dublin. The murder was unreservedly condemned in the *Irish Press* editorial on 22 July 1976, which said that 'one of the first principles of civilised dealings between states' had been violated by this first assassination of a diplomat in the history of the Irish State. It added: 'With the Ambassador's death the question of the North and of violence here moves on to a new plane.'

However, a number of 'Letters to the Editor' published in the *Irish Press* following the murder caused a huge row between the newspaper and the Government. A proposal to establish a memorial fund to honour the late Ambassador was supported by some letter-writers, but strongly criticised by others as an insult to all who had died for Ireland. Among those following the correspondence was the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien, who disclosed to the London Correspondent of the *Washington Post* that he was keeping a file of the letters and that he might use a proposed Criminal Law Bill against the newspaper that published them.

### Threat to Press Freedom

Controversy raged for nearly a fortnight in the media and in the Dáil after the *Irish Press* exclusively revealed the existence of O'Brien's file, following a personal tip-off



to Tim Pat Coogan from the *Washington Post* correspondent, Bud Nossiter. 'O'Brien's Threat to Press' said the front page heading on the exclusive story across five columns (*Irish Press*, 4 September 1975). The editorial, simply headed 'Censorship', ran the full length of the page and noted that the 'Letters to the Editor' appeared 'only a few centimetres from this editorial column'. It said that that would be 'a very short step indeed' for Conor Cruise O'Brien 'and those who think like him' to further suppress opinion and pave the way to full-scale political censorship. It continued:

The proposed law is the most serious threat to the freedom of the press and liberty of expression ever proposed in this country under native government, except for the period of Emergency during World War 2 when there was an internationally created state of emergency. Now we have a domestic and largely artificially created one, but one of its principal effects is going to be the ease with which, if the new legislation goes through, the Government can gag the Press – to a far more damaging degree even than it now inhibits RTÉ's news gathering activities. (*Irish Press*, 4 September 1975)

Further full-page editorials appeared on the following days, alongside a full page reprinting of all of the contentious letters and of the entire *Washington Post* article on the story. In that article Nossiter wrote:

He (Conor Cruise O'Brien) pulls from his files letters to Coogan's *Irish Press*. They denounce contributions to a memorial fund for the murdered ambassador as an insult to the patriots who died for Irish freedom. 'With this kind of language', O'Brien says grimly, 'you induce young people to join the IRA, putting youths at the disposal of men who may order them to kill or maim'. (*Irish Press*, 9 September 1976)

The *Irish Press* editorial on the day it reprinted the *Washington Post* article also ran the full length of the page and it said:

The plain fact of all this controversy is that ... Dr Cruise O'Brien was caught with his hand in the cookie jar by the *Washington Post* reporter to whom he spoke, never dreaming that his infamous file of newspaper cuttings would become public knowledge. The good doctor probably imagined that he was talking to someone from a big-time international newspaper, that all that passed between them would be above the heads and beyond the purview of the peasantry of the local Irish press. (*Irish Press*, 9 September 1976)

Within a week, the coalition government, which was only the third non-Fianna Fáil government since that party came to power nearly half-a-century before, backed down and abandoned its planned media curbs by accepting a Fianna Fáil amendment without a division in the Dáil. The ensuing *Irish Press* editorial said:

It is, of course, extremely gratifying to the *Irish Press* in particular and Irish journalism in general that the government should so greatly water down the

infamous section of the Criminal Law Bill which has given rise to such widespread fears of press censorship ...

The fact that the *Irish Press* was so involved in this, fortunately victorious, battle for the freedom of the press is in a sense irrelevant. Tomorrow it could be any newspaper or section of the media. What is important is that a vital component of any democracy, the freedom of the press, is preserved. We should be looking to the government for an implementation of the Helsinki Agreement (on the dissemination of information) and not listening to the sound of governmental scissors at work on our newspapers. Our Northern Ireland brethren will respect us all the more for being allowed to see us freely discussing ourselves, warts and all. After all, what do we have to hide? (*Irish Press*, 15 September 1976)

In the Dáil debate, incidentally, the *Irish Press* was attacked from both sides of the house. Eddie Collins of Fine Gael said that the paper's editorials were 'irresponsible' and 'beneath the dignity of any national newspaper', but Neil Blaney, formerly of Fianna Fáil, said that the editorials did not go far enough and that they should have echoed the sentiments of some of the notorious letters to the editor (Dáil Éireann, 8 September 1976).

Two years after that row, Tim Pat Coogan was himself a conduit for IRA messages, a role which he later said enabled him to save lives. He said that a UDA leader told him that that illegal organisation would stop killing Catholics at random if the IRA stopped using no-warning car bombs. Coogan contacted the IRA with the message. He said one of the founders of the Provisional IRA, Daithí Ó Conaill, subsequently contacted him by phone in the *Irish Press* newsroom and said: 'Right, we'll stop the bombing and they can stop knocking off Catholics. You're the channel. Tell them that' (Coogan, 2008: 218).

Coogan has maintained that his coverage of the Troubles never condoned violence. He told an interviewer in 1984: 'The editorials are there to be read. The condemnation of violence is explicit and continuous' (Moran et al., 1984). He also said that he had resisted the 'self-censorship that permeated most of the print media' during the Troubles, declaring:

The record of the *Irish Press* on matters Northern will show that I managed to maintain a relatively uninhibited coverage of Northern events throughout. (Coogan, 2008: 189).

Not everyone shared Coogan's certainty. A confidential Stormont Cabinet memo of February 1971, released in 2002 under the 30-year rule, described the *Irish Press* as 'a paper bitterly hostile to Northern Ireland' (*Phoenix*, 2002).

Accusations – particularly in contemporary magazines *Magill* and *In Dublin* – that the *Irish Press* was 'pro-IRA' have been dismissed as 'unfair' by newspaper historian Mark O'Brien. He has argued that the paper's approach of condemning violence, urging compromise and educating the southern population about the root causes of the conflict 'was correct in the long term' (2008: 169).

Coogan's editorials also caused internal tensions at Burgh Quay. In 1980 a minority of journalists (31 out of about 200) publicly disassociated themselves from an edi-

torial on the North (O'Brien, 2008: 169). A former assistant editor, John Spain, has recalled asking to be relieved of having to write editorials on the North in Coogan's absence. 'It became a sort of office joke that the leaders I wrote – after one atrocity I called the IRA a bunch of subhuman Neanderthals – were the polar opposite to Coogan's leaders' (*Irish Voice*, 7 November 2007).

Updated editions of Coogan's IRA book reappeared on the bestsellers' list periodically in the 1970s and 1980s and his book on the H Blocks, *On the Blanket*, which he had written during the first half of 1980 before the dirty protest gave way to the hunger strikes, was also a bestseller.

### IRA Moves Toward Constitutional Politics

The election of H Block prisoner Bobby Sands to the House of Commons in April 1981 was reported in an *Irish Press* front page off-lead, being deemed less important than the Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis pledge by environment minister Raphael Burke to introduce a £4,000 grant for first-time house-buyers. 'Sands Victory Shocks North' said the heading over a three column report that began: 'Bobby Sands, the 27-year-old Provisional IRA hunger striker, is the new MP for Fermanagh-South Tyrone ... his victory yesterday ... sent shock waves through the Loyalist camps and startled Catholics in the Community at large who are opposed to violence' (*Irish Press*, 11 April, 1981).

Margaret Thatcher's refusal to meet the hunger strikers' demands was condemned as 'flinty' in the April 22 editorial. It went on:

However one looks at it, Mr Sands is a politician in prison. He has been elected because of his politics to the British Parliament itself. He has been elected while still in jail and on hunger strike, two very special categories in themselves. The Special Category status he is looking for is something the prisoners once had and which was taken away from them ... the stalemate and tension over the H Blocks is a fitting symbol of the faecal society within which the larger prison of Northern Ireland society has become – a society where industry decays, new prison accommodation multiplies, and the children of the rioters of 1969 go forth to do battle with the RUC of 1981. (*Irish Press*, 22 April 1981)

The front page on the day Sands died after 66 days on hunger strike described him as a 'prisoner, protester and poet' and that day's editorial maintained an emotional tone, beginning thus:

Belfast narrowed his options as a boy, gunmen chased him from his home, from his job. At 18 he picked up a gun himself and walked – with the IRA. In jail Britain narrowed his options to two – live as a criminal or die for an ideal. (*Irish Press*, 5 May 1981)

The editorial said that Sands would not have gone on hunger strike and would not have been elected an MP if the British had granted the concessions agreed the previous December to end an earlier hunger strike. If the British had delivered on the December deal, it said,

Long Kesh would now be a place unknown outside Belfast virtually, instead of being a symbol throughout the world of the last clenching of the jaws of the otherwise almost toothless British bulldog. (*Irish Press*, 5 May 1981)

Five months later, an editorial on 5 October welcomed the end of the hunger strikes:

Ten deaths inside the prison, six times that number outside, a community polarised as never before and the political and international stage surrendered to the paramilitaries – that has been the price paid ... we have all been losers in this grisly conflict – the Thatcher government in Britain, whose reputation was dragged across the front pages and TV screens of the world, not less than the people of this island, north and south. (*Irish Press*, 5 October, 1981)

The editorial predicted that it would take a decade to undo the damage caused, partly because of the way the strikes had transformed the Republican movement. The Provisionals, it noted, had gained greatly in terms of propaganda, finance and recruitment, while also winning seats in parliament north and south of the Border. But, it asked: 'Is it not time that they also made a fresh start by putting away the bomb and the armalite?'

Five more years passed before the Provisionals fully embraced the ballot box by abandoning the Sinn Féin policy of refusing to recognise the established parliaments, including the Dáil. The Sinn Féin Ard Fheis that abandoned abstentionism was covered in three separate page one reports, including the lead story, as well as on all of page 4 and most of another inside page on 3 November 1986. The accompanying editorial, headlined 'Change of Tactics', said that the Ard Fheis vote was a matter of strategy, not principle, and it emphasised that it was not a case of Sinn Féin suddenly embracing the democratic system. It said:

The Armalite, rather than the ballot box, still rules. The killings will still go on, even while seats in the South are being contested and even if some are won ... Nevertheless, however cynical and tactical the new move may be, it is to be welcomed. Anything that brings Sinn Féin and its membership into closer contact with constitutional politics and the democratic system offers hope of progress ... Exposure to public scrutiny and other political opinions may not convert Sinn Féin overnight, but it will be a valuable and healthy experience for them that must have some effect on the military campaign. (*Irish Press*, 3 November 1986)

The capture off the Kerry coast in September 1984 of the trawler *Marita Ann*, laden down with hundreds of guns and skippered by future Sinn Féin TD Martin Ferris, prompted an editorial predicting more headlines 'by, with or from the IRA' and observing that the Republic had to cope with the consequences of the Troubles, but not the causes (*Irish Press*, 1 October, 1984).

The editorial just a few weeks later when the IRA almost succeeded in murdering Margaret Thatcher and her Cabinet during the Conservative Party conference in Brighton acknowledged the renewed strength and endurance of the IRA. It said:

The horror and the hurt caused to people must appall all of us, but people have suffered in Northern Ireland since the Troubles began and it must be said that a rigid British intransigence ... has been a major contributory factor to the continuation of that cancer.

The editorial said that Northern Ireland had been the scene of many recent deaths and bombings, 'some of them far worse in scale, though perhaps not in significance, than yesterday's' and it went on:

We must not condone what happened ... but we cannot bury our heads in the sand and pretend we do not understand why it happened. Yesterday's unconstitutional horror could not have occurred had the advice and the urgings of constitutional and moderate politicians been heeded before now. (*Irish Press*, 13 October 1984)

The constitutional and moderate politicians were tested a year later by the signing of the Anglo Irish Agreement, which also prompted one of the last *Irish Press* editorials to trumpet its nationalist legacy. The front page lead story on the morning after the signing acknowledged that it was historic, but said that opinion was divided among nationalists, with Fianna Fáil criticising it and the SDLP supporting it. The page one headline said 'Nation Split on Deal' and the off-lead quoted Charles Haughey describing it as 'a major setback to Irish unity' and pledging to oppose it in the Dáil. The editorial noted that Haughey's preferred option was Irish unity and it said he was 'perfectly right and consistent' in this, adding: 'There will never be peace in this country until Irish unity finally comes about' (*Irish Press*, 16 November 1985).

Less than two years later, with Haughey back in power as Taoiseach for the last time as head of a single-party Fianna Fáil government, Tim Pat Coogan stepped down as editor, after 20 years in the post.

Coogan's departure allowed the management of the *Irish Press* to proceed with plans to convert the paper from broadsheet to tabloid format. Stories about the North appeared less frequently on the front page of the tabloid, despite a pledge in the final broadsheet on 9 April 1988 that the paper would remain 'a popular quality newspaper for all Ireland'.

### The Peace Initiative

The influence and status of the newspaper had declined dramatically over the course of the Troubles, in line with a relentless drop in circulation. An initial rise in sales in the months following the outbreak of the Troubles was soon reversed and followed by year-on-year falls, which accelerated in the years after its founder's death. A further steep fall followed Coogan's departure and the conversion to tabloid format. The circulation department had asked Coogan to reduce coverage of the North on page one and by 1993 his successor, Hugh Lambert, did not mention the North at all in a lengthy interview about his own editorship, although the *Irish Press* was the first newspaper in the republic to welcome the Gerry Adams/John Hume peace initiative in the same year. By then, sales were less than half what they had been in 1968 and the paper was being outsold not just by the *Irish Times*, but also by the *Cork Examiner* and by some of the British tabloid imports and by the recently-launched Anglo-Irish tabloid, the *Star*.

The paper ceased publication within a year of finally being able to run as its front page headline the words 'A New Dawn' heralding the IRA ceasefire that came into effect at midnight on September 1 1994. The leader said that it was a day when courage replaced all the cowardice of the previous 25 years, adding: 'All fair-minded people must recognise this in the IRA's historic decision to put away the bomb and the bullet.' It also said:

Certainly, yesterday marked the end of a deadly era in Irish affairs. Nevertheless, it would be only prudent to advance with extreme caution in the days and weeks ahead. There is still much pain and hatred. There is much healing to be done. (*Irish Press*, 2 September, 1994)

The *Irish Press* was gone when the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998. And it was forgotten by the time the IRA made its ceasefire permanent in July 2005. The paper had ceased publication after a lifespan of fewer than 64 years on 25 May 1995, on the day that it reported on the historic meeting between Gerry Adams and the British Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew. The meeting took place in Washington DC on the fringes of a conference hosted by US President Bill Clinton to encourage US investment in Ireland in the wake of the first ceasefire. The report, on page 10, said Adams described the meeting as frank, friendly and positive, while Mayhew's spokesman said it was 'civil' and added that Mayhew had told Adams that Sinn Féin could best promote confidence 'by using its influence with the IRA to get substantial progress on decommissioning of their stock of arms and explosives' (*Irish Press*, 25 May 1995).

A similar sentiment had been expressed in the very last *Irish Press* editorial on Northern Ireland, published in its penultimate issue on May 24, alongside a 12-page supplement on the Washington conference. The editorial said that the conference was generating enormous goodwill, but that investment decisions were based on economics, not sentiment. It continued:

This will require evidence from the Irish representatives in Washington – and most notably Mr Adams – that the peace is permanent and that there is a determination to find a negotiated political settlement which will provide long-term stability ... Deprivation, poverty and unemployment are all inextricably linked to the paramilitary violence which has extracted such a heavy toll on both communities over the past 25 years. There is now an opportunity to change that and to offer today's youngsters the jobs and prosperity that the Troubles have denied to so many of their parents.

## AUTHOR

Ray Burke is the author of *Press Delete: The Decline and Fall of the Irish Press* (Curach Press, 2005). A native of Galway city and a graduate of University College Galway (now NUIG), he has worked as a journalist in London and Dublin since 1977. He worked for the *Irish Press* from 1983 to 1995 and was the paper's last News Editor. He has been a news editor at RTE since 1996 and is currently Chief News Editor of RTE News.

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# PEERING THROUGH THE FOG:

## American Newspapers and the Easter Rising

Robert Schmuhl

NEARLY A CENTURY AFTER THE Easter Rising and its aftershocks thrust Ireland to the forefront of international attention and gave this island's struggle for independence a stiff shove, journalistic coverage of those distant days still provokes questions and provides lessons of enduring pertinence, extending far beyond one academic's obsession with the subject. This is particularly true for someone peering through the fog of time past and from afar in trying to come to terms with the events that occurred and the people who were involved during those momentous months of 1916.

Americans are often accused – with indisputable justification – of being Yankee-centric: absorbed in matters within our borders to the exclusion of the rest of the world. Curiously, this was *not* the case with the Easter Rising, prompting an observer to ask: Why was there such extensive coverage in American newspapers, and what impact did all of this press attention have on people throughout the United States?

Answering these questions involves a certain amount of scholarly speculation – or, at least, journalistic guesswork – but even tentative responses help tell a story with lasting implications for the trajectory of Irish-American and, more broadly, Anglo-Irish-American relations, as they evolved in the 20th century.

### Significant Coverage

Surveying the coverage across several US newspapers leads to the initial conclusion that editors viewed occurrences in Ireland as remarkably significant on their own and as inextricably linked to the Great War unfolding in Europe. For fourteen straight days – from 25 April through 8 May – the *New York Times* devoted front-page play to news about Ireland, with one of those days (Saturday, 29 April) featuring eight articles on page one (four of those jumped to the next page), eight more on page two, and an editorial and a commentary column tucked inside the paper. Every word of news copy on page two is about the Rising, and there are only three small ads competing for space. But the *Times* was not alone in recognising the importance of the Rising and its aftermath. Other New York newspapers, the *Washington Post*, the *Boston Globe* and the *Chicago Tribune* – not to mention Irish-American and Catholic periodicals – gave sustained prominence to events taking place in Dublin and elsewhere in Ireland.

Looking back from our vantage point, decades removed from the Rising, the seven signatories of the Proclamation cast the longest shadows. They planned the insurrection, fought for their cause, and, subsequently, were executed. For American readers in 1916, however, Roger Casement was the premier newsmaker. His ill-fated



landing and capture launched coverage on 25 April about a mysterious, German-assisted plot against the British in Ireland, and fascination with him continued until he was hanged in London on 3 August. In certain respects, the intense interest in Casement bookends US attention to the Rising and what followed. 'Sir Roger' was already well-known in America, a key fact in itself, and his personal war against the country he had served with such distinction in the foreign service to merit knight-hood was a human-interest story, with both elite status and public conflict, that newspapers could not resist.

The *Boston Globe* (on 30 April) published a long profile, 'Sir Roger Casement's Astounding Career', and the *Washington Post* ran an essay by Casement on 14 May under this headline: 'England Seeking US Aid to Dominate All Europe, Says Sir Roger Casement'. The *Post* followed up with a feature on 4 June, 'Madmen Make History: Sir Roger Casement Would Have Been Immortal If He Had Succeeded'. Both the *Boston Globe* and *Chicago Tribune* came out with 'Extra' editions on 3 August to report Casement's hanging. Ten days later, the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* devoted four full pages to an American friend's reflections on – in the article's title – 'Roger Casement, Martyr'. Given the persistent conjecture about his sanity, executing Casement made Britain's reprisal seem like bloodthirsty revenge and that was much more reprehensible to Americans.

### Inaccuracies

The American journalist and author Richard Reeves offers a revision of the chestnut that news provides 'a rough first draft of history'. With the internet and other technological wonders of our current time, Reeves opines that the public increasingly receives 'the rough first draft of the first draft' (1998: 122) of history – a tentative, less than authoritative version of events that's always open to error or mistake. In a curious way and because of the circumstances of time, place and technology, that was also the situation in 1916, as American readers tried to figure out what was happening across the Atlantic in Dublin and throughout Ireland.

It is not until Sunday, 30 April (a day *after* the surrender) that the name Pearse surfaces in dispatches, and he is almost exclusively called either 'Peter' or 'J.H.' Pearce – with a 'c' rather than an 's' in the spelling of his surname. On the same day, 30 April, a page one *New York Times* headline states 'Leader Connolly Killed', an erroneous report also carried in the *Washington Post*. Four days later, on 4 May, both papers again raise the possibility of Connolly's demise, with the *Post* being definite and the *Times* inserting the qualifier 'Probably' in its headline. In addition, the *Boston Globe* and the *World* in New York were definite in claiming on their front pages that 'Four Irish Uprising Leaders' (in the phrase of the headline in the *World*) had been shot during the first round of executions.

To its credit, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Connolly had *not* been executed; however, immediately after this clarification, it is noted that 'three other signatories of the Irish proclamation have been found guilty and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. Their names follow in boldface type:

**Edmund W. Duggan.**

**Pierce Beazlaw.**

**Joseph Maginnis.**

These men, of course, did not sign the Proclamation – all who did were executed – but Edward (not Edmund) Duggan, Pierce Beasley (not Beazlaw), and Joseph Maguinness (spelled differently from what the *Tribune* reported) did receive ‘three years’ penal servitude’. But a more whopping inaccuracy follows in the next paragraph. The article explains that Roger Casement’s trial will begin shortly and that:

Casement is confined in a cell in the Tower [of London], not far from the scene at which the firing squads snuffed out the lives of the four rebel leaders who eight days ago had raised the curtain of revolution.

In that single sentence, the location of the first executions is wrong, Connolly is now counted as one of the executed, and the days since the initial Rising are two short of what is correct.

Pointing out such factual mistakes might prompt some retrospective sniggering, but it also raises a more serious cautionary flag about the necessity for scepticism in evaluating breaking news. In this circumstance, American newspapers were dealing with dispatches almost exclusively filed from London about Ireland at a time when information from the scene was difficult to obtain and subject to wartime censorship. Indeed, several U.S. papers published this identical paragraph from a wire-service dispatch on 28 April to illustrate the problems in collecting basic information:

Dublin is further from London today than Peking is from New York, so far as communication for the general public is concerned. No Irish newspapers have reached here [London] since the rising, and passenger traffic has been for the most part suspended. The only information comes through official channels.

Irish newspapers, of course, weren’t readily available. The *Irish Times* missed two days (28 and 29 April), the *Independent* seven days (26 April until 4 May), and the *Freeman’s Journal* ten days (25 April until 5 May). The British origin of much of the coverage – many articles appearing in the U.S. came directly from London newspapers, and it wasn’t until 29 April that any dispatch carried a Dublin dateline – meant that certain imperial biases made their way across the Atlantic, slanting the reports. Repeatedly the rebels are referred to as ‘Sinn Feiners’ engaged in a ‘Sinn Fein Revolt’ that lacked the support of Irish people at large.

### Providing Context

Despite a pro-British tilt and the difficulties in gathering verifiable facts with the resultant errors we now identify, the American newspapers provided greater context for understanding the Rising and its meaning than an analyst today might anticipate. For instance, on two successive weeks, the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* devoted lengthy features to (in the titles of the articles) ‘Ireland’s Sudden Revolt’ (30 April) and ‘Poets Marched in the Van of Irish Revolt’ (7 May). The first story is a balanced backgrounder that relies on the perspectives of prominent Irish-Americans to explain why the Rising occurred as well as the thinking behind ‘Redmond sympathizers’ and ‘the Sinn Féiners’. The second one, contributed by poet Joyce Kilmer, who was on the staff of the *Sunday Magazine*, establishes early on the Irish literary

dimension to what had just happened. A few sentences from the opening offer a viewpoint rich in the romance of word-inspired adventure that also evokes sympathy:

A poetic revolution – indeed, a poets’ revolution – that is what has been happening in Ireland during the last two weeks, says Padraic Colum, himself an Irish poet, now in New York. The sudden rise and fall of the Irish Republic, the event which has made Dublin crowd Verdun off the front pages of the newspapers, was peculiarly literary in character ...

The report goes on – with much quoting of Colum, who personally knew many of the leaders – and quickly we find this sentence:

The leaders of the revolutionary forces were almost without exception men of literary tastes and training, who went into battle, as one of the dispatches phrased it, ‘with a revolver in one hand and a copy of Sophocles in the other.’

Very Irish, to be sure.

Interestingly, Kilmer, who was killed fighting in France during the summer of 1918, was remembered by one friend, Robert Cortes Holliday, as ‘a much more ardent Irishman than many an Irishman born’ (1918: 18). His own poetry was not immune to revolutionary influence, and he was inspired to compose his poem, ‘Easter Week’, collected in *Main Street and Other Poems*, to commemorate the Rising. Instead of mano-a-mano, the first stanza (1917: 66) goes poet-a-poet:

‘Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone  
It’s with O’Leary in the grave.’  
Then, Yeats, what gave that Easter dawn  
A hue so radiantly brave?

The poem closes with these lines:

Romantic Ireland is not old.  
For years untold her youth will shine.  
Her heart is fed on Heavenly bread,  
The blood of martyrs is her wine. (1917: 67)

### Editorial Shelling

Notwithstanding the extensive news and feature coverage that presented the thinking of all parties, the *New York Times* on its editorial page was for the most part anti-rebel, even anti-Irish. An editorial of 29 April begins: ‘Ireland in a state of rebellion is Irish. Never was it otherwise.’ Later, this sentence appears: ‘Rebellion has been the chronic, almost to say the natural, condition of Ireland, being now and then only a little more acute than usual.’ The final paragraph ends with a flourish:

Never has Ireland been free, and yet she has all the more passion for freedom. What these present rebels want is not to be free of England. They pursue an ideal of freedom. England is the symbol of restraint. If it were not England, it

might be a King. If it were not a King, it might be fairies that go about in Ireland, assuming fantastic shapes, to frighten people and make them do all the things they do not want to do.

On 2 May, editorial shelling from the *Times* continues under the heading 'The Irish Folly'. The lead of this blast is direct: 'The Irish revolt in Dublin is soon ended. It was utterly mistaken, it has had only evil fruits.' This time fairies don't frolic at the conclusion. The editorial takes on Irish-American supporters in no uncertain terms in one 108-word sentence:

The leaders of the movement cannot be acquitted of responsibility, they are altogether blameworthy, but a sterner censure even may justly be visited upon those in this country who have encouraged them and now commend their acts of incredible folly and rashness, for when any man of the Irish race in America speaks in praise of the deplorable Sinn Fein escapade it is hard to shut out the belief that a seeking for popularity here and a political motive purely domestic, rather than sincere sympathy with the Irish 'cause' or hope for its success, have been the real prompting to such aid and comfort as has been given.

Two days after this editorial appeared, another one in the *Times* of 4 May, titled 'Fate of the Irish Rebels', endorsed the first executions, noting

war is a stern business and the subject who sets himself against his King or the citizen who rises against his Government when the nation is straining every resource to overcome enemies in the field can hardly expect mercy.

But the times themselves and specific events can alter any perspective. On page one of the *Times* for 12 May, a dispatch with a London dateline begins:

The most dangerous factor in Ireland's situation which had been recognized since the brief rising flashed in the pan was that the punishment of the rebels would cause a reaction of sympathy among the warm-hearted and emotional people. This threatening danger appears to be fast materializing.

A shifting of opinion (at least to a modest degree) is detectable even on the paper's editorial page that same day. Under the heading 'Irish Rebels', we read: 'Fourteen persons have been executed, two or three apparently sacrificed to official stupidity. But the whole proceeding is incredibly stupid' and

unworthy of England. Leave that sort of thing to Germany. No matter if these misguided rebels, intellectuals, and miscellaneous poor devils and scalawags were suborned and abetted by Germany. Only an Irish madman would look for help to the Prussian drill sergeants.

In the last paragraph, *The Times* regains its traditional moorings by complimenting 'the noble, generous British' and the 'Irish patriotism of John Redmond'.

How the *New York Times* handled the Easter Rising and what followed illustrates the policy of that paper in trying to keep news and editorials separate, with a wall between these distinct types of journalism. The New York Public Library is currently cataloguing the archives of the New York Times Company Records, and the papers of publisher Adolph S. Ochs are among the first files available to the public. Ochs, who bought the *Times* in 1896 and introduced the slogan 'All the News That's Fit to Print' that year, was considerably more passionate about delivering news than taking a stand – and he even considered doing away with the editorial page from 'fear that editorial crusading might inspire news reporters to slant stories to conform with the crusading' (Berger, 1951: 528).

Early in the first World War, the publisher received a letter condemning the *Times* for being anti-German, with the reader cancelling his subscription. Ochs responded (box 120, folder 13) on 26 August 1914:

The *Times* is much more free from unfairness, even with the shortcomings arising in a time of extraordinary excitement and confusion, than you are free from prejudice, for you are most unfair in your criticism. The *Times* undertakes to secure the news from every source available, and to present it without prejudice. Doubtless The *Times* has often received extravagant and perhaps untrue reports from English and French sources, but this has been true also of the little news that has been available from German sources. The *Times* does not attempt to alter the news to conform to its sympathies or to gain favor with its readers.

A few days after Ochs wrote this news-above-all letter, he received a memo on 4 September 1914, saying the recipient had contacted the circulation department to cancel the cancellation of his subscription. He had decided to give the paper another chance.

Other American newspapers, however, did not share the editorial 'sympathies' of the *Times* about the Irish situation. In fact, on 2 May, a day *before* the first executions, both the *Washington Post* and *Chicago Tribune* published editorials dealing directly with the prospect of British punishment going too far. In its opening sentences, the *Post* finds fault with the Rising and a specific participant:

The latest Irish rebellion collapses even sooner than was expected. It was poorly organized and poorly executed. It relied upon Sir Roger Casement, a harebrained if not insane agitator whose only successful stroke was the enlisting of German assistance. Why the German government or people lent any aid to Sir Roger is not apparent, since the Germans are not usually addicted to wild-goose chases.

A few sentences later, the editorial takes a pronounced turn, complete with an element of prescience:

The uprising, abortive as it proved to be, is nevertheless a reminder that the Irish question remains to be settled. Ireland must have a greater measure of home rule. If the British government has not entirely lost its balance, it will

not make fierce reprisals in Ireland, but will deal tolerantly even with the ring-leaders of the insurrection. . . . History is too full of instances of brutal and excessive measures by England in dealing with Ireland, and it ought to serve as a warning against such a policy now.

In its editorial, the *Chicago Tribune* follows a similar course. The first sentence is judgmental, though not dismissively so, as we see in the *Post*:

The collapse of the Irish rebellion reveals the romantic futility of its beginning. Passionate men without proper equipment undertook to throw off English rule at the very time when Great Britain, for the first time in its history, has a great army, now well trained.

The ending offers advice rather than ‘a warning’, but the point is the same:

There is a hint that this now subdued Irish rebellion will not be followed by many executions to give a new set of memories to the Irish. It would be a wise England that saw the Irish revolt compassionately.

Three days later – after Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh and Tom Clarke had been executed – the *Tribune* returns on its editorial page to the British reaction in dealing with the rebels. Under the heading ‘Unnecessary and Inexpedient’, the paper asserts: ‘... execution was precisely the way not to rid Ireland of rebels. The men executed were the best possible material out of which to make martyrs.’ The *Tribune* goes so far as to propose an alternative approach:

It might have been far more effective to turn the three men loose in Dublin. Their heroism would have oozed away a little every time a citizen looked at the wrecked postoffice. The practical result of their fury would have established them in the mind of the comfortable, practical citizens as wild dreamers.

These editorials deserve sustained attention because they show competing viewpoints then taking shape for readers of American newspapers. The Rising might have been brief, disorganized, and, ultimately, unsuccessful, but the British response merited stern criticism of its own. In other words, the action and the reaction were judged simultaneously with the evaluation of the reaction proving more influential – as the headlines turned into history. The ‘wild dreamers’ did, indeed, become ‘martyrs’, and during that transformation American public opinion changed to the benefit of the rebels and their cause. As Jay P. Dolan writes,

[The British] turned a military victory into a political debacle by executing the leaders of the rebellion ... The executions turned the tide of public opinion against the British, ushering in a decisive chapter in Ireland’s century-long struggle to gain freedom from British rule (Dolan, 2008: 201).

### Irish America

Throughout the nineteen days encompassing the Rising and the executions, news about Ireland made the front page of the *New York Times* seventeen days, the *Boston*

*Globe* sixteen, the *Washington Post* thirteen, and the *Chicago Tribune* and the *World* (of New York) eleven. With other stories and features inside, along with editorials and columns of commentary, the US press provided comprehensive coverage of what was happening in Ireland. It was as though the European war (about which America was publicly neutral) had another front – and this one that came out-of-the-blue had a significant number of blood ties. At the time, an estimated one-fifth of the population in the States – approximately 20 million people – were Irish by background, with many living in the cities of New York, Boston and Chicago.

As a result of this demographic reality, some of the coverage focuses on the response of Irish America to everything occurring on this island. This means that dispatches originating from either London or Dublin were subject to censorship, but that reportage from interviews or meetings across the Atlantic could – and did – include full-throated statements favouring Irish independence from people in America. You see this to a degree in late April and early May – the already mentioned features in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* are good illustrations – but there is even more localised attention as sympathy grew within the Irish-American communities. On 15 May (three days after the last executions in Dublin), the *Times* puts this headline on its front page: ‘Irish Pay Tribute to Dublin Rebels/Throng at Carnegie Hall Memorializes Them as Martyrs of Race’.

Here is the lead of that story:

Thirty-five hundred Irish men and women gathered in Carnegie Hall last night to honor the memory of the fifteen Irishmen put to death by the English government after the Dublin uprising. They adopted resolutions demanding that there be no settlement of the European war which did not include a plan for the freedom of Ireland.

The report goes on to say that 4,000 people couldn’t get into the hall and ‘Cheering consumed more of the time than did speechmaking.’

This situation – a free press going about its work – did not escape the attention of the British. On 1 June, General Sir John Maxwell, commander-in-chief of military forces here, established a Press Censor’s office in Dublin, and on 5 June the Censor, Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Decies, issued a directive, with the word CONFIDENTIAL in capital letters and underlined at the top, to every newspaper in Ireland.

The document is included in the ‘Press Censorship Records 1916-1919’ in the National Archives (box 3, folder 128), and it is specific, especially in warning about the re-publication of certain journalistic reports:

You are requested to give careful consideration to the following before publication:

1. Resolutions and speeches of Corporations, County and Urban Councils and Boards of Guardians.
2. Letters from soldiers, connected with the late rising in Dublin.
3. Extracts from American newspapers, or private letters sent you from individuals received from America.



4. Criticisms in the form of letters from individuals on the late rising in Dublin, of a violent nature.
5. Letters sent you from men arrested in Dublin in connection with the late rising now in detention.
6. Indiscretions made by other papers either in Foreign or Home Press should not be published.

No objection will be taken to any publication of above provided the language is moderate; doubtful matter should be submitted before printing.

Despite this edict, borders between Ireland and America proved porous. The *Gaelic American* even acquired a copy of this directive and published it in a special box on 8 July 1916, with an editorial comment as a headline: 'How the Irish Press is Gagged'.

Indeed, a couple months later, the *Roscommon Herald* provided an engrossing, you-are-there article from the *New York Times Magazine*. In the US, the article, which was published on 20 August 1916, carried the headline 'Irish Girl Rebel Tells of Dublin Fighting', and recounted the story of Moira Regan, who served in the GPO and then moved to live in America. Though mostly direct quotation, Joyce Kilmer received the byline.

In the *Roscommon Herald*, the editor tried to defuse the explosive nature of the article by burying it on page five with a one-column headline, 'Tales of the Rebellion', and by saying, 'The New York Times, a strong pro-Ally paper, prints the following ...' However, the Censor did notice, firing off this warning, which is included in the Press Censorship Records (box 1, folder 30) and dated 20 September 1916:

I am directed to inform you that the publication of your article 'Tales of the Rebellion' purporting to be taken from the 'New York Times' and appearing in your issue of 16th September is in contravention of the Defence of the Realm regulations, and I am further instructed to warn you that the publication of Press matter of this description renders your paper liable to suppression under the Defence of the Realm Act. You are advised in future to submit articles of this nature to the Press Censor before publication.

### The Gaelic American

Although what we now call the 'mainstream' press offered a variety of perspectives in explaining the Rising and its aftermath, other journalistic outlets made no attempt to be either fair or balanced in reporting about or commenting on events in Ireland. The *Gaelic American*, a weekly with a national circulation of 28,000, flew the flag of Irish republicanism in every issue it printed. This is probably to be expected because the editor of the *Gaelic American* was John Devoy, a tireless figure for many decades in the cause of an independent Ireland. In fact, Kevin Kenny asserts: 'It was largely through Devoy's fund-raising and organizational efforts in the United States that the Easter rebellion of 1916 became possible' (2000: 173).

The coverage in the *Gaelic American* still makes for fascinating reading today, and what is distinctive is the breadth of its treatment. As late as 29 July 1916, there's a detailed, eyewitness report, 'Inside History of the Easter Week Rebellion', complete with what's called an 'Insurrection Map of the City of Dublin'. The third paragraph



begins: 'The whole inside story cannot be published at present, but enough can be made public to clear up the situation for the benefit of Nationalists in America.' Succeeding issues provide amplification with great specificity: 'James Connolly Butchered While Wounded' (12 August 1916), 'Graphic Story of the Battle of Ashbourne' (23 September 1916), 'Widow's Own Story of Skeffington's Murder' (30 December 1916). Especially for the *Gaelic American*, the Easter Rising represented the springboard to accomplish the most desired objective, becoming a news story without a conclusion.

Besides chronicling the heroism of the rebels and their cause, the *Gaelic American* frequently offers press criticism directed at the coverage by large U.S. dailies. In the 20 May 1916 issue, along with a lengthy article, 'Facts of the Rebellion Begin to Arrive' (as though whatever facts previously reported in other outlets were not reliable), there is a story about Casement's preliminary hearing on the charge of High Treason. One paragraph provides the newspaper's point of view:

It was a highly sensational case, and, as might be expected, the New York papers reveled in the details, some of which were clearly invented, either in London or here. All of the cabled reports and the headlines were hostile to the prisoner except those of the *American*, the *Evening Journal*, and the *Evening Mail*, but the *Sun's* correspondent was the meanest liar among them. He confessed himself a pimp, described how he looked over Sir Roger's shoulder to spy on the notes he was taking, and lied like a cur about his 'nervousness' and 'perturbation', which the other correspondents denied. Of course this fellow is an Englishman. But, whatever his nationality, he is a dirty skunk.

Devoy rarely missed the chance to take a punch at other journalistic organisations, with the *New York Times* a favorite target. One article, published 5 August, carries this headline, 'Lying for England,' and begins: 'The *New York Times*, which, in its European news, is an echo of its London namesake and loses no opportunity of presenting the English side of every case.' The *Gaelic American* then reprints a dispatch from the *London Times* that the *New York Times* had also published – with the sole purpose of showing the gross inaccuracies and biases on display for less devout readers.

Devoy, called by Pearse 'the greatest of the Fenians' (Dooley, 2003: 1), wrote and edited with his own definite stance and bias. Never addressed, of course, is the matter of professional propriety – his direct involvement in the Rising that he unceasingly celebrated in the pages of the *Gaelic American*. In a certain sense, he was both a leading actor in the drama and a most-approving reviewer of the performance. A consideration of journalistic ethics didn't cloud his mind or seem to be the concern it might be today.

### A Major Story

Historical hindsight might dilate on the chaos, confusion, not to mention countermand, of the Rising. Though W.B. Yeats could discern the birth of a 'terrible beauty' in his poem 'Easter, 1916', Michael Collins wrote in a letter a more hard-headed assessment: 'On the whole I think the Rising was bungled terribly, costing many a good life' (Coogan, 2002: 54). Either judgment, though, comes after the dust has settled and the embers have cooled.

What's more germane in examining American press coverage is that US newspapers had no idea how events would play out, so they had to try to keep up with the information as it became available. That in itself wasn't easy, given the restrictions on reporting, the problems with trans-Atlantic cable communication, and everything else. The *World* at one point even sought the opinion of George Bernard Shaw, who wired back on 4 May these words: 'Silly, ignorant, wrong-headed – but honorable, brave and republican' – an assessment that received extensive usage.

The Rising became a major and continuing story in the U.S. for several reasons. Its militaristic adventurism intersected with other war news from Europe at the same time Britain was under Zeppelin and U-boat attacks from the Germans. Though officially neutral – Woodrow Wilson's re-election slogan in his presidential campaign of 1916 was 'He kept us out of war' – a large percentage of Americans supported England and its allies against Germany – and, at the time, England was on its back foot.

A second reason is that the Rising, though taking place thousands of miles away, had a strong local dimension for several large newspapers. It wasn't just the case of first-, second-, or third-generation Irish-Americans being readers of the big-city press. Across the country, Irish-American groups and clubs conducted meetings to support the rebels and to offer humanitarian assistance. The 'exiled children in America' (in the phrase of the Proclamation) wanted to know the fate of relatives and what the future of Ireland might be.

A third, related reason is that news about Ireland and the Irish wasn't exactly foreign to those who followed the American press. An Irish race convention had taken place in New York in March of 1916. This convention, which drew 2,300 delegates from all over the U.S., led to the creation of the Friends of Irish Freedom and to a considerable amount of press coverage (Doorley, 2005: 36). In addition, during the following month, on two consecutive Sundays before Easter, the largest New York newspapers devoted major features to Irish issues. The lead offering of the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* on 9 April was George Bernard Shaw's controversial essay on what the title called 'Irish Nonsense about Ireland', and a week later the *World* published 'The Heroism and Gallantry of the Fighting Irish: Told by John Redmond, Nationalist Leader'. This extended interview, conducted by James M. Tuohy, was filed from London and placed atop the 'Editorial Section', complete with a line drawing of Redmond. At the time, according to *N.W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual & Directory*, the circulation of the *World* was 519,269 on Sunday (1917: 676) and that of the *Times* was 340,904 (1917: 673).

News of the Rising hit with hurricane force, but it wasn't as though Americans were clueless about matters in Ireland prior to Easter week of 1916. Once the Rising itself ended, the coverage of the executions, Casement's trial, and his hanging kept the Irish Question at the forefront of American thinking. In certain respects, the story's continuity kept it alive – as you see, for instance, with the *New York Times*. Its *Sunday Magazine* alone ran major articles on 6 August ('The Plight of Home Rule'), 13 August ('Roger Casement, Martyr'), 20 August ('Irish Girl Rebel Tells of Dublin Fighting'), 24 September ('American Sentiment and American Apathy'), 8 October ('Irish Leaders Fall Out Over Home Rule Fiasco'), and on 26 November ('Bernard Shaw's Solution of Ireland's Troubles').

Though it falls beyond the scope of this paper, a 427-page book, with the title *The Irish Rebellion of 1916 and Its Martyrs: Erin's Tragic Easter*, appeared later that

year from New York publisher Devin-Adair and prompted press coverage on its own. The work of eight authors and edited by Maurice Joy, this volume presents historical background, the report of the Royal Commission, and hagiographic profiles of key participants. What is known today as an instant book, the publication reflects the thinking that at least in some American quarters the Rising and everything it represented deserved more lasting attention than the treatment in daily papers. More significantly, something of continuing consequence was taking shape, both in Ireland and in the United States.

However, it is clear that the American press did play a crucial role in enlightening reader-citizens about the broader struggle for Irish freedom. Repeatedly in the coverage there are comparisons of the Rising to the Boston Tea Party or to the Battle of Lexington, and of Pearse to George Washington, Casement to Benjamin Franklin – and Redmond to Benedict Arnold, the most-reviled traitor to America in the American Revolution. Echoes of US history could be heard from afar, and they had impact.

Journalistic problems presented themselves with regularity, but the bigger picture emerged with considerable clarity as time passed and more facts became known. This is particularly true in the case of the *New York Times* in its ambition to be recognised as the nation's newspaper of record. The sheer volume of its coverage of what was happening in Ireland and Europe in general is noteworthy, but so, too, is its variety and seriousness. The newspaper met the historic moment at a critical phase in its evolution – and, subsequently, won the first ever Pulitzer Prize for Public Service for publishing so many documents, speeches, and reports 'relating to the progress and conduct of the war'. The award was made in 1918 for previous coverage.

The *Times*, though, was by no means alone. Dispatches from and about Ireland became a staple of the stateside news diet and, over time, fortified with this information, support from the New World helped sustain the cause of Irish independence. Governmentally, the Wilson Administration assiduously avoided the issue, with John Devoy in his memoirs branding Wilson 'the meanest and most malignant man who ever filled the office of President of the United States' (1929: 470).

But the people, on their own, did what they could. They quickly created the 'Irish Relief Fund' and collected between \$100,000 and \$150,000 in humanitarian aid (Doorley, 2005: 52). Before Wilson departed the White House, the 'Irish Victory Fund', flush with \$1 million, established the American Commission on Irish Independence (Doorley, 2005: 92). During the War of Independence, the American Committee for Relief in Ireland sent over another \$5 million in assistance to the Irish White Cross (Tansill, 1957: 415), and the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland, composed of prominent Americans (many without links to Irish America), conducted hearings and published a massive, brutally candid report. In part, the people acted because they were informed. That knowledge, in no small measure, arrived steadily – often through the fog – in the words and pictures that were published in American newspapers after the first shots of the Rising were fired.

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# CROSSING BOUNDARIES AND EARLY GLEANINGS OF CULTURAL REPLACEMENT IN IRISH PERIODICAL CULTURE

Regina Uí Chollatáin

THE FIRST IRISH LANGUAGE PERIODICAL, *Bolg an tSolair*, was published in Belfast in 1795 although journalism in a modern context through the medium of Irish did not begin to flourish until the early years of the twentieth century. The ‘Gaelic column’ in English newspapers; Philip Barron’s Waterford-based *Ancient Ireland – A Weekly Magazine* (1835); Richard Dalton’s Tipperary journal *Fíor-Éirionnach* (1862); alongside some occasional periodicals with material relating to the Irish language, ensured that the Irish language featured as an element of a modern journalistic print culture (Nic Pháidín, 1987: 71–2).

Central to a reassessment of Irish language newspapers and periodicals in an historical context are two important elements. First, the linguistic and cultural boundaries within which Irish language media evolved and existed, and second, the role and status of the journalist in contemporary society, assessed in the context of traditional, long established Irish writing practices. Study of these practices by Irish language scholars suggests that English newspaper material was used as a source for Irish language manuscript material, crossing written and print boundaries in an emerging print culture through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Buttimer, 1994: 63–101; Ní Úrdail, 1997: 233–4). The overlap between the role and function of the learned highly trained file, the scribe, and that of the untrained journalist within the societies in which they functioned, is also significant in the concept of cultural replacement. By the time that the Irish language journalistic forum was used as a vehicle for communication within the Irish language community in the early twentieth century, linguistic boundaries were also unclear. This necessitated a dual-language approach in the public sphere – ensuring the use of Irish in an English language journalistic forum, while also securing the use of English in an Irish language forum.

This paper will examine the initial stages of Irish language periodical culture within this historical framework, focusing on the initial identity projections, alongside the survival of this branch of journalism as an instrument in the replacement of a culture which was perceived to have been displaced for two centuries at this point. This cultural replacement transcended traditional cultural boundaries and writing practices.

## Periodical Culture, Language and Identity

### *Periodical Culture*

The foundation of the periodical *Bolg an tSolair*, in September 1795, marks the official starting point of Irish language periodical culture and journalism (de Hae and Ní Dhonnchadha, 1938; Uí Chollatáin, 2004; Morash, 2010).

In August 1795, the *Northern Star* newspaper (founded in Belfast in January 1792), announced:

On Monday next will be published the first edition of *Bolg an tSolair* or Gaelic Magazine containing Laoi na Sealga or the Famous Fenian Poem, called The Chase with a collection of choice Irish Songs translated by Miss Brooke to which is prefixed an abridgement of Irish Grammar, a vocabulary and familiar dialogues... (24-27 August 1795).

The main aim of the periodical was described thus:

It is chiefly with a view to prevent in some measure the total neglect, and to diffuse the beauties of this ancient and once-admired language, that the following compilation is offered to the public; hoping to afford a pleasing retrospect to every Irishman, who respects the traditions, or considers the language and compositions of our early ancestors, as a matter of curiosity or importance. (Preface, *Bolg an tSolair*, 1 September 1795)

This statement outlines clearly the importance that was afforded to the 'ancient and once-admired language' respecting the 'traditions' of 'our ancestors'. The aim of the periodical was not therefore one of communication, but one of cultural preservation. This is not totally at variance with the sentiment of a period in which many newspapers proclaimed a role in the quest for national identity. The progression of the concept of nation and nation-building was the result of the political climate in European nations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the initial Irish language periodical culture was closely linked to the understanding of identity and nation. The *Northern Star* newspaper echoed this thinking, as did *The Nation* – 'Like the *Northern Star*, *The Nation* was published not simply to inform, but to forge a national identity' (Morash, 2010: 82). The national identity portrayed by *Bolg an tSolair* embraced the fact that the 'Irish language and culture could not be preserved by one class, culture or religion', as observed by Máire Ní Aodha and Tarlach Mac Giolla Bhríde in February 1995, in the limited edition reprint of *Bolg an tSolair*.<sup>1</sup> This belief was subsequently echoed in the journalistic writings of prominent revivalists in the national Irish language newspaper, *An Claidheamh Soluis agus Fáinne an Lae*: 'Gaelicism is the birthright of us all: of Protestant as of Catholic, of Unionist as of Nationalist, of non-native speaker as of native speaker, as of North as of South' ('Ulster', *An Claidheamh Soluis agus Fáinne an Lae*, 24 December 1904).

*Bolg an tSolair* was rooted in the Irish language community and its editor, Patrick Lynch, a well known Irish language teacher in the Belfast Academy, hailed from a

<sup>1</sup> Translation by author. 'Ba léir i 1795 narbh fhéidir teanga nó cultúr áirithe a chaomhnú ag aicme nó creideamh amháin, agus is léir gur amhlaidh sin do ghluaiseacht na Gaeilge sa lá atá inniu ann' (Limited Edition, Réamhrá, *Bolg an tSolair*, 1995: 3).

native Irish speaking family with an all-Irish school in County Down (Ó Buachalla, 1968: 37–9; Breathnach and Ní Mhurchú, 1999: 57–8). Most of the journal had specific Irish language and literary content, combining Irish grammar with a collection of Irish songs translated by Charlotte Brooke. The inclusion of Brooke's work confirms the scholarly approach, being hailed by R.A. Breathnach as producing 'the first work of Irish literary scholarship' (Breathnach and Ní Mhurchú, 1999: 22). The combination of Patrick Lynch's editorship with the work of a remarkable female Irish scholar, who was the daughter of an upper class Protestant landlord and literary writer, attests to the boundaries crossed through the forum for Irish language journalism, projecting an egalitarian, inclusive approach. Patrick Lynch's projection of identity was culturally driven and the framework being created was one which he hoped would redress 'the total neglect' of the language. The scholarly approach, alongside the revival of the 'grammatical and critical knowledge' of the Irish language as referred to the previous April in the *Northern Star* (Ó Buachalla, 1968: 30), would be central to the projected cultural identity.

Although *Bolg an tSolair* was published by a newspaper office which promoted the United Irishmen movement, it is interesting that the chosen format was the periodical rather than the newspaper, given that the *Northern Star* already had a significant readership. Clearly the periodical publication was in itself a statement of cultural replacement, which correlates with Ballin's theory on periodical production highlighting 'the relations between literary form and social change' (2008: 2). Ballin also notes that, 'For the reader "taking" a periodical is often a conscious act of affiliation, a decision about cultural placement or aspiration' (2008: 2). From a literary viewpoint therefore, *Bolg an tSolair* may well have created the blueprint for Irish journalism which would have a strong periodical element with a particular emphasis on historical and literary content:

In order to render the work more useful to the public it shall be continued in numbers, at a low price, and as this first is partly taken up with Grammar, in all future numbers, historical comments and a variety of poems, songs shall be given. (Ó Buachalla, 1968: 33)

Despite the hope for the continuance of *Bolg an tSolair* however, the September issue of 1795 appears to be the only one printed. A booklet issued by *Cuideachta Gaelic Uladh* entitled *Bolg an tSolair* appeared in Belfast in 1837, but there is no evidence to connect the two publications. The fact that the first issue included the words 'Gaelic Magazine' in the title allows it to fall within the genre of periodical publications, whereas the second issue appears to have been in booklet form.

The chronological classification of journalistic writings proves a significant starting point for a study of Irish language journalism in both print and broadcast media, but:

Its analysis is not merely chronological, but is grounded in the belief that the relationship between the media and the communities they serve is a complex and subtle one, symbiotic and mutually revelatory. The media inform social and political change as well as reflecting it. (Horgan, 2001: 2)



The foundation of *Bolg an tSolair* is one of the instances that attests to this ‘complex’ relationship between media and community, which was one of mutual dependence in this instance. Thus, while acknowledging that boundaries existed, this periodical did not strictly adhere to traditional demarcations, preferring to use this journalistic forum for cultural preservation. As such, a study of its background and material may well be one of the sources which provides present day students of Irish language journalism with insights into the social, cultural and linguistic changes which were emerging. In order to fully explore these changes however, it is important to understand the linguistic background from which *Bolg an tSolair* and subsequent nineteenth century Irish language periodicals and newspapers emerged.

#### *Language and Identity*

When discussing the ‘functional perspective on media use’, Tom Moring states that through the process of normalisation ‘speakers of the language if they so choose, can live their life in and through the language without having to resort to other languages, at least within the confines of everyday matters in their community’ (2007: 18). In a journalistic context, the process of normalisation in the Irish language did not begin until the Revival had taken hold in the urban environment of Irish speakers, if at all. The first Irish language newspaper which would provide a public forum for speakers of the language to engage with ‘everyday matters in their community’, did not emerge until 1898, more than a hundred years after *Bolg an tSolair* (Nic Pháidín, 1998: 51–3). Clearly, therefore, the formulation of Irish identity and the ‘decision’ regarding cultural placement needed to be established prior to this ‘normalisation’ process.

Although *Bolg an tSolair* is the first ‘official’ record of a journal with Irish language content, the Irish language was already in a state of metamorphosis prior to this. By the middle of the eighteenth century:

The shift from Irish to English as a community language was gathering momentum, especially in Leinster and Ulster. This new situation was a communication challenge at a time when the native public had a wide range of ability in both Irish and English ... the diverse handling and the artistic cultivation of both languages shows how deep and extensive the understanding spread on the creative possibilities that were associated with the public’s ability in both languages. (Mac Mathúna, 2007: 184–5)<sup>2</sup>

This language milieu was the forerunner to the founding of *Bolg an tSolair*. If the periodical was, as Ballin states, seeking ‘to project an identity’ (2008: 2), the community which *Bolg an tSolair* served was complex, but also seeking political change through the projection of a new identity. The *Northern Star* was a Nationalist newspaper but:

<sup>2</sup> Translation by author. ‘Bhí an t-athrú ó Ghaeilge go Béarla mar theanga phobail ag bailiú luais, go háirithe i gCúige Laighean agus i gCúige Uladh. Dúshlán cumarsáide a bhí sa staid nua seo, nuair a bhí réimse leathan cumais sa Ghaeilge agus sa Bhéarla araon ag an bpobal dúchasach. ... Léiríonn an láimhseáil ilghnéitheach agus an saothrú ealaíonta a deineadh ar an dá theanga a dhoimhne agus a fhorleithne a leath an tuiscint ar na feidearthachtaí cruthaitheacha a ghabh le cumas an phobail sa dá theanga (Mac Mathúna, 2007: 184–5).



Samuel Nielson, the proprietor of the *Northern Star*, and Arthur O'Connor, editor of *The Press*, were attempting to create a public sphere whose boundaries were not limited by the island of Ireland, but which extended to Paris, London, Washington and beyond. (Morash, 2010: 59)

The eighteenth century was a transitional period in language evolution in Ireland and this 'communication challenge' created a confusion of identity and a displacement of culture. Increasingly, however, in a cultural context, evidence from periodical culture would appear to suggest that the boundary between east and west is as significant as that between north and south through this period. Paradoxically, initial steps in cultural replacement through the medium of print in Irish language periodical culture came to the fore earlier in the urban-bases of the east of Ireland – primarily a non-native-Irish speaking language milieu. It was important therefore to explore the 'creative possibilities' that were associated with the 'public's ability in both languages', as referred to by Mac Mathúna. One of the initial chosen avenues for these creative possibilities was to be found in the periodical culture of the era. In a public sphere with unlimited international boundaries – as envisaged by Nielson – a knowledge of English was essential to ensure that this 'creativity' was exploited to its fullest.

With a gap of almost ninety years between the first Irish language periodical and the literary periodical, *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge*, in 1882, the projection of identity, while still important, was not to the fore. *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* was founded by The Gaelic Union, an offshoot of The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, which embraced all creeds and nationalities. The first edition of the journal also included articles in Welsh, French and Scottish Gaelic (Ní Mhuiríosa, 1978: 23). Clearly, though not consciously, and indeed perhaps as a consequence of literary revival above all else, a 'decision' had been made which would help to ensure cultural placement for the twentieth century. A reassessment of newspaper and periodical culture confirms that this 'decision' in the form of a literary periodical was hailed by Douglas Hyde as the foundation stone of the Irish language revival (Ní Mhuiríosa, 1978: 24). Noting Ballin's theory on 'taking' a periodical as a 'decision about cultural placement', as referred to earlier, (Ballin, 2008: 2), the 'taking' of *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* by the Irish-language public through the forum it provided for literary debate suggests that this decision was being taken by the learned Irish language community.

This is very evident in the first article in the first issue of the journal in November 1882. In this article, the author, John Fleming (Seán Pléimeann), discusses at length the links between Irish and other languages. He places particular emphasis on the fact that renowned scholars from other European nations respect the Irish language literary tradition to such an extent that many of them are taking it upon themselves to come to Ireland to learn it. In a further demonstration of crossing boundaries within the context of cultural placement, the writer invites the readers to give these scholars, who are prepared to assert ownership of the language, a helping hand to revive it. He concludes this section by saying that this is the reason why *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* was founded ('An Ghaedhilg ins an naomhadh aois déag', *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge*, November 1882). If scholars from other nations and countries were ready to take ownership of the Irish language, this periodical would be instrumental in helping them to work alongside the Irish language community in

order to ensure the replacement of a culture that had been displaced for centuries. This echoes Nielson's approach: creating an unlimited public sphere regardless of linguistic or other boundaries.

At the end of the nineteenth century, a cultural milieu was evolving in which Irish language journalism would play a pivotal role for the next fifty years. The periodical culture would be central to this 'cultural affiliation' and the subsequent status of the Irish language:

When Marx (1999, 44–5) describes commodities as being converted through exchange value into 'social hieroglyphics', he might be writing of the way in which periodicals are acquired not merely for their contents but because of their potency in signifying cultural affiliation or social status. (Ballin, 2008: 2)

This concept correlates with Hyde's linking the founding of *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* to the start of language revival and progression. Due to the lack of research into Irish language journalism until the late twentieth century, it was not possible for Hyde to link *Bolg an tSolair* with the onset of an ideology of identity which could be acclaimed as the cornerstone of scholarly Irish language revival. More importantly, in light of Hyde's theorising, however, is the 'potency in signifying cultural affiliation or social status' (Ballin, 2008: 2), which was an important element in the publication of *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge*. The fact that *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* was affiliated to a particular Irish language organisation, The Gaelic Union, allowed it additional status in replacing a diminished oral Irish language culture with a modern literary one. The cultural affiliation associated with *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* was important in that it was one of the instruments which symbolised the replacement of this culture for the Irish language community.

One of the main features of Irish language journalism during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth is the focus on literature – a core feature of the Irish periodical. McNair defines journalism as, 'Any *authored* text, in written, audio or visual form which *claims* to be (i.e., is presented to its audience as) a *truthful* statement about, or record of, some *hitherto* unknown (new) feature of the *actual, social* world' (1998: 4). With the initial strands of Irish language journalism rooted firmly in a literary-based periodical culture, how does this type of journalism concur with McNair's definition? As a result of the European influence on these writers, it is normal to assume that they were presenting a truthful statement of the 'actual social world' in their cultural and literary commentary, but they were also using the journalistic platform as a forum for promoting literature. The literary element correlates more precisely with a European strand of journalism than with the anglophone journalistic environment in which Irish journalism existed. Mancini links these literary roots, stating that:

The existence of strong links with literature constitutes another important feature of journalism in many European countries, [this type of journalism being] very much oriented towards commentary and interpretation ... and judgement, and pays more attention to 'literary' writing than to the simple and terse telling of the facts that constitutes the essential prerogative of journalism in the modern sense of the term. (Mancini, 2005: 83)

McNair's theory on culture control throws some light on the significance of the political and literary journalists of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Irish language journalism, and their dominance in Irish society. The defining of these writers – 'political essayists', 'chroniclers', 'satirical observers', and 'public officials' – within the framework of 'the functions of the modern journalist' in an Irish language context by Bergin, raised the status of these journalists, in theory, to one that was comparable at least to that of the ancient file or bard (Greene and Kelly, 2003: 4). Contrary to popular belief therefore, it is highly unlikely that Irish language journalism was viewed solely as a forum for the cause (*'ar son na cúise'*), but was in fact another method of dignifying the cultural control necessary for developing Irish society as this 'dominant elite' saw it. This in some way explains the literary trend directed at, and in tune with a more learned readership which linked the journalist to the role of the file (Bergin) or scribe (Ó Buachalla, 1991–2: 38). Attracting this reading public, combined with the notion of the function of the modern journalist being similar to that of the file or bard, the cultural control exercised by the vision of the ancient bardic system could be re-established albeit in a modern format. Cultural replacement would therefore be nurtured to the highest standard. By crossing the boundaries of language, class, creed and writing genre through the passage of journalistic freedom, they allowed the Gaelic culture to 'exist' and rejuvenate.

Bergin's comparison of the function of the file or bard to the modern-day journalist may be simplistic in terms of journalistic criticism in a contemporary context. Referring to the style of writing used by the Dublin based scribe Tadhg Ó Neachtain in the early 1700s, Ó Buachalla asserts that Ó Neachtain describes the events and happenings which he writes about indifferently; reporting objectively, as a professional journalist would do (Ó Buachalla, 1991–2: 38).<sup>3</sup> This is probably more in tune with the communicative as opposed to the interpretative model of journalism. The combination of applying McNair's and Mancini's journalistic theories to traditional and modern writing practices, alongside Bergin and Ó Buachalla's literary and linguistic theories on the function of the journalist, is an interesting insight into the crossing of boundaries between manuscript and print culture, and perhaps more importantly, between the learned bard and untrained journalist.

### The Story

Central to the Irish psyche, particularly with regard to the Irish native speaker, is the telling of the story, which is also the core element of journalism. With the foundation of *Bolg an tSolair*, the journalistic forum was recognised as a progressive transitional instrument to enliven a culture perceived as near dead in 1795. Aitchison's statement that 'the oral traditions of previous millennia may be the direct ancestors of modern journalism' (2007: 12) suggests that the oral transmission of the story and the journalistic element are intertwined. It is important therefore to examine briefly the main elements of the story within the confines of the Irish language tradition and journalistic conventions. An in-depth study of this kind is not within the scope of this paper, but a brief look at the basic elements is helpful in examining the concept

<sup>3</sup> Is go fuarchúiseach, de ghnáth, a chuireann Ó Neachtain síos ar na tarlaingí is imeachtaí a bhfuil trácht á dhéanamh aige orthu; tuairisciú oibiachtúil, mar a dhéanadh iriseoir gairmiúil (Ó Buachalla 1991–2, 38).

of crossing boundaries and cultural replacement within a historical and linguistic framework. Allowing that the main forums used were the Gaelic column and the periodical in the initial 'restructuring' and 'replacement of culture stages', the periodical had a pivotal role in the type of journalism that was being practised, carrying literary stories rather than factual news events.

Geographical boundaries are also important, Ireland being an island on the edge of Europe, and housing the language of a people who are marginalised in a geographical sense, while at the same time showing a distinct leaning towards a European literary practice – as is evidenced from the journalistic writings of over a century (Uí Chollatáin, 2008: 12–92). The significance of the traditional understanding of the 'story', combined with the 'story' within the framework of journalistic conventions, provide a possible basis for the continuum of a public sphere for Irish culture and identity. In examining journalistic conventions, Schudson states that, 'We turn nature to culture as we talk and write and narrate it' (1995: 52). If we turn nature to culture as we talk and write and narrate it, it is difficult to ignore the underlying implication that Irish culture did not just 'exist' in its representation and transmission, but was indeed alive through its reception during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries despite the dearth of published material in the Irish language. The links between the role of the file, the scribe, the oral storyteller, and the journalist, while relatively new as a concept, reveal important insights into Irish oral, written and print cultures. The style and structure used to tell the story differentiate between the transmission of these cultures, demonstrating structural challenges. The language and content are more relevant to the intellectual challenge. Both of these structural and intellectual review strategies are directly related and central to journalistic review and assessment (Glasser and Marken, 2005: 264). This crossover and creative manipulation of language, as discussed previously in terms of the necessary creativity in the Irish-English communication challenge, is central to the direction that Irish language journalism would eventually take. Indeed, the bilingual newspaper approach may have proved to be too much of a communication challenge as the journalistic form took hold, creating complex structural and intellectual challenges for both language communities. In the earlier period, therefore, the literary periodical format was possibly more conducive to cultural replacement. The newspaper format and forum needed to redefine its purpose, a purpose which would not focus entirely on cultural placement and the formulation of identity, but on communication and journalistic principles.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the communicative approach was to the fore. The establishment of contact with all members of the community was paramount, be it a real or imaginary contact. Long before McLuhan's 'global village' (1964), and Anderson's 'imagined community' (1983), the aspirations of AE, George William Russell (as editor of the *Irish Homestead* (1905–23), and then at the *Irish Statesman* (1923–30)), best describe this concept of community in the context of the nation's identity. Robert Davis tells us that George Russell 'aimed to define the nation as "an imagination common to millions of people"'; he 'wanted to create a popular culture that would replace the rifle of revolutionary days with books and the arts' (Ballin, 2008: 92). He opened his first editorial on 15 September 1923 with the statement that the *Irish Homestead* would be 'a journal which will be national in this sense, that it would regard all living in Ireland, North or South, and strive to bring about unity through mutual

understanding and friendship' (Ballin, 2008: 92); an ideology already referred to in the context of the *Northern Star* and *An Claidheamh Soluis*.

A review of historical writing practices and the onset of periodical culture shows that the story changed from one which was heard and written to one which was seen and read. However, 'the language that is learned by the eye is never living', as was stated in *Fáinne an Lae* in 1899 (18 November 1899). Modern journalistic theory contests this viewpoint, as the very nature of journalistic practice being live and ongoing, as previously discussed in the context of Schudson's theories, provides a forum for a living language. These developments were therefore either poorly exploited, or were not relevant enough in the 'real actual world' (McNair), of the Irish speaker to be availed of and utilised to the maximum. This highlights the structural and intellectual challenge of journalism within a linguistic communication challenge. Perhaps the overemphasis on vocabulary and terminology building, instead of intergenerational transfer through 'live' communication, detracted somewhat from the full exploitation of the journalistic forum, disregarding the creative possibilities which it presented:

Do not let the Irish of the old folks die with them. ... These old people possess priceless jewels of language that will not be found in any book, and the value of which, if only found in books or writings, can never be rightly understood. Moreover the language that is learned by the eye is never living. A living language is learned by ear alone. What we want to preserve is not a mere vocabulary of Irish to be put together anyhow, such Irish will always be more English than Irish. We want to preserve the speech and mode of thought of our forefathers and to understand it as they understood it, and this can only be done by making the old Irish-speaking men and women hand over to us their beautiful, expressive and dignified modes of speech. ('A few words in season', *Fáinne an Lae*, 18 November 1899)

More than one hundred years on, with a prolific Irish language print media in the public forum, but with no definite result in a full Irish language revival, was it ever or is it ever going to be prudent to look to print media as a tool for language revival in a communicative context, while ignoring the possibilities it presents for intergenerational transfer in a living language?

The periodical culture allowed for the development not of a new story to be told, but rather the restructuring or reorganisation of the story as described by Aitchison. In the struggle to find answers for oral language revival this achievement is often overlooked. This is partly as a result of an east west boundary which, although acknowledged in the seventeenth century, was neither crossed nor acknowledged officially in the process through which the replacement of Irish culture took place.

### **From Periodical to Newspaper: *Bolg an tSolair* to *Fáinne an Lae* and *An Claidheamh Soluis***

The dearth of Irish language journalistic material in the form of periodical and newspaper titles in the nineteenth century is indicative of a public with a diminished voice or story to tell. Despite the early efforts of the *Northern Star* newspa-

per in Belfast with the issuing of Patrick Lynch's *Bolg an tSolair*, the publication of Irish language newspapers and periodicals was sporadic and sparse until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, barring the efforts referred to at the beginning of this article. Major historical events were, to some extent, responsible for the lack of economic support for such ventures, but the significance of the founding of *Bolg an tSolair* cannot be underestimated as the conceptual cornerstone of Irish language journalism and as such, a significant step in the creation of an emerging ideology of national Irish identity for future generations. *Bolg an tSolair* was very much language and literary based and clearly the language itself was central to the ideology presented. From a journalistic standpoint, it is clear that the voice or story for the Irish language community in this public forum would have a scholarly focus. The language was to be the unifying force primarily in a scholarly and intellectual context. A 'grammatical and critical knowledge' of it was the focus of a revival, while language usage and communication were viewed as secondary, with knowledge of the language being acquired apparently in three to four months (Ó Buachalla, 1968: 30).

In the context of current theory on periodical culture therefore, what was the projected identity of this periodical and what precedent did it set for subsequent Irish language print culture? The most important fact here is that this publication had initiated the process of periodical culture in the Irish language, suggesting that initial steps were being taken to 'project an identity', an identity which would be instrumental in the representation of cultural replacement over the next two centuries.

Almost ninety years on, the scholarly 'revival' took root. The ownership or 'taking' of the periodical *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* by the primarily Dublin-based Irish-reading public in 1882 'highlights the *relations* between literary form and social change' (Ballin, 2008: 2) as opposed to highlighting the differences. This suggests that the Irish language community at which *Bolg an tSolair* was directed (and not the United Irishmen movement alone), had built upon and progressed from the notion of seeking to project an identity in 1795 with the issuing of *Bolg an tSolair*, to making 'a decision about cultural placement or aspiration' (Ballin, 2008: 2). By the beginning of the twentieth century, another shift in ideology was apparent with the founding in 1898 of the first bilingual language newspaper, *Fáinne an Lae* (amalgamated with *An Claidheamh Soluis* in 1900). This was to secure the presentation of Irish language in a communicative, journalistic forum on the understanding that it would be accessible to all language users, not merely scholars and poets:

Henceforward, current news in Irish will be the outstanding feature of our Irish department. Our news columns will be written by a staff of competent and representative Irish writers. Home affairs will naturally occupy the place of honour. Foreign events will be treated in due perspective, and will always, of course, be approached from the Irish side. Our ideal is to place in the hands of the Irish speaker in Glenties or Aran a newspaper giving him, in vivid idiomatic Irish, a consecutive and adequate record of the home and foreign history of the week. ('Sinn Féin' (editorial), *An Claidheamh Soluis agus Fáinne an Lae*, 14 March 1903)



The timing of the publication of *Fáinne an Lae* coincides with the beginning of new understandings of communication and the concept of the 'professional communicator', as outlined by Daniel Hallin (Glaser and Marken, 2005: 267). This process viewed journalists as:

... brokers in symbols who mediated between audiences and institutions, particularly but not exclusively government. In this role they lost their independence and became part of the process of news transmission. In this role they principally use not intellectual skills as critics, interpreters, and contemporary historians, but technical skills such as writing, a capacity to translate the specialized language and purpose of government, science, art, medicine, finance, into an idiom that could be understood by a broader, more amorphous, less educated audience. (Carey, 1969: 137)

Theoretically, to some extent at least, a new understanding of Irish-language-associated identity had emerged in the urban public sphere and the periodical culture preceding *Fáinne an Lae* ensured that the concept of the use of Irish in the public sphere was well founded.

Ideally journalistic practice should not be reliant on language usage as an instrument for assessing performance, quality and communication. News content, the impact of the story and subsequent public discourse suffice to do this, and these benchmarks take precedence over the language used, and the culture or society from which the story emerges:

Journalism and journalists face two sets of challenges, one intellectual and one structural ... Whatever the urgency to provide answers to questions about the practice of journalism and the performance of the press, these answers need to be checked by and grounded in a larger intellectual framework that deals with journalism in overtly normative terms. In other words, it makes some sense to assign a priority to intellectual issues, particularly ones having to do with basic questions of quality and value, because the treatment of these issues will impose very real limits on the treatment of structural issues. (Glasser and Marken, 2005: 264)

Irish language journalism, functioning as a minority concept despite the language having national status, is an interesting example of a complex intellectual framework dealing with journalism in overtly normative terms. This is particularly relevant in light of conflicting current linguistic theories which neither condone nor condemn conclusively the effect of media on cultural issues, one of these being language. Some of this can at least be partly explained in Daniel Hallin's understanding of 'the scientization of journalism', a process which began in the early 1900s. The Irish language at this time was in the early stages of revival and it was envisaged that the journalistic forum would be utilised in its fullest capacity to revive the language. If, however, journalists were viewed as mere 'brokers in symbols who mediated between audiences and institutions', then, paradoxically, the role of the language itself was in fact diminished. The fifty years of revival journalism subsequent to the founding of *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* were pivotal in building a public sphere in which the urban and rural Irish language community would find a new voice. Perhaps as a result of

literacy issues in the Irish language, this revival journalism did not succeed in providing a voice or effective public sphere for the Gaeltacht Irish speaker. Although subsequent efforts through the twentieth century were important in maintaining the language in a journalistic platform, the usage of the language was reduced mainly to an educational forum which ironically created a new communication challenge. What public discourse remained for Irish language journalists in a national language that was rooted primarily in the scholarly and cultural domain?

The challenge lay, therefore, in combining the 'professional communicator' with the independent language revivalist. The theories put forward by Carey and discussed earlier are very insightful in understanding the combination of these roles (1969: 137). If the Irish language public sphere was to accommodate this shift in the role of the 'writer' from the traditional role of 'critic' and 'public chronicler' to that of 'professional communicator' a new communication forum needed to be created within the confines of new approaches to writing practice in the public forum. It was on this more general communicative as opposed to language based forum that *Fáinne an Lae* laid its foundation. At this point, the use of bilingualism in a newspaper format was important in this new communicative approach.

Leerssen contends that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, 'Ireland was atomized into many separate small-scale communities without the wherewithal to form a society, without the joint continuum of a public sphere' (2002: 37). In the absence of a public sphere for this period, however, English newspaper material and oral tradition in the Irish language, alongside ancient traditional writing practices, provided the cultural background which paved the way for the general use of Irish in a journalistic forum. This went some way to providing an avenue for the replacement of a displaced culture in the Irish language. That is not to say that the Irish culture did not exist through the period of change, as has been discussed by Ó Ciosáin (2005: 139), merely that it did not exist in a formal, journalistic context, 'as the historically conditioned social space where information, ideas and debate can circulate in society, and where political opinion can be formed' (Dahlgren, 1995).

Scholarly research asserts that scholars and poets were to the fore in discharging the functions of a modern journalist. Nonetheless, in the absence of a public sphere, in the context of current theories on journalistic culture and form, it is difficult to concur conclusively that the 'modern journalist' as a 'professional communicator' fully correlates with the function of a modern journalist according to the criteria laid out by Bergin and more recently by Ó Buachalla. More relevant perhaps is the use of newspapers as sources for manuscript material referred to earlier, suggesting that the English language journalistic forum was preparing the way for a new bilingual public space, which supports the trend towards a more communicative approach than one of cultural conservation alone.

The presence of the Gaelic column in nineteenth century newspapers also supports the concept of a bilingual public space (Uí Chollatáin 2008). In Irish language journalism, this space fulfilled the communicative and literary role, as opposed to the critical role of the journalist. Looking at projection of identity and cultural placement as elements of periodical culture therefore, and the initial glimmers of revival in this forum, long before the onset of the revival period, suggest a conceptual scholarly language revival. Subsequently, the twentieth century newspaper form was to promote Irish as a national language which would ensure its survival in the public domain, but



would not necessarily guarantee the quality of the language or the journalism. The focus would be on communication and language usage, as opposed to language and journalistic standard and content, which in time created the juxtaposition of a national language as a minority concept in the public sphere.

### Conclusion

Leerssen's thesis of early twentieth century print culture as being 'the "sattelzeit"' which saw the first stage of Irish independence, 'the reconquista and de-anglicization of Ireland's public sphere' (2002: 39) is valid in this context. However, not unlike Hyde's understanding of *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge*'s contribution to the revival, this too disregards the projection of identity within the boundaries of the Northern Ireland Irish language community through the publication of the first Irish language periodical, *Bolg an tSolair*.

The communication challenge of Irish language print journalism was to give English to the native Irish speaker and Irish to the English speaker, as opposed to providing the 'constituency' referred to by Leerssen for the Irish speaker (2002: 39). Although the story had been restructured to allow it to be told through the nineteenth century and subsequently through the twentieth century, print journalism failed to give that 'constituency' to the Irish language community, but did provide other avenues for telling and restructuring their story. One of the more successful of these avenues was the periodical culture.

It was not until the mid-twentieth century, and indeed the twenty-first century that the native Gaeltacht voice re-established itself as a central element of Irish culture. The result is that today it is that native voice that has repossessed or replaced the total anglophone environment in which print culture was first fostered, allowing a new public space for both voices. McNair explores the possibilities presented in the globalised news culture in the context of the emergence of print culture:

But history is also repeating in the politically more significant sense that the democratising consequences of the emergence of print culture in early modern Europe may be viewed as an analogue of what is happening now with the internet and real-time satellite TV on a planetary scale. If, as is accepted by most media historians, the invention of print facilitated the great bourgeois revolutions in the United Kingdom, America and France, and was central to the process of democratisation set in motion by those revolutions, it is neither naïve nor utopian to speculate that the recent expansion of global news culture, delivered through the proliferation of channels provided by the internet and satellite television, can facilitate democratic progress at the global level. (McNair, 2006: 17)

Modern theories on journalistic practice bring new facts to light in the story of Irish language journalism. This cornerstone of 'national identity' through the medium of periodical culture in 1795, with the publication of *Bolg an tSolair*; alongside the progression to a conscious decision about cultural placement by the Irish language movement through the founding of *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge*, may well have mapped the coordinates for a new era in Irish language and culture. The Irish language journalism that followed provides valuable insights into the Ireland of the twentieth century.

The founding of *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* in 1882 – preceding the founding of the Gaelic League by eleven years and surviving until 1909 – tells its own story. This was preceded by a scant periodical tradition and a lone Irish language periodical publication in Belfast, which may well be one of the catalysts responsible for the setting in motion of a new Irish public sphere. The milieu from which this periodical emerged would nurture a new Irish identity and pave the way for cultural replacement, with that milieu being hailed as the cultural and social centre for Irish music revival, and, as such ‘the precursor by a century of the Irish Revival’ (Ó Buachalla, 1968: 34). In the context of Irish language journalism, while literary research is a core element in the concept of nation and revival, clearly it is prudent to include Irish language journalism as a central focus for cultural studies, nationalism and identity.

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# A PROTESTANT PAPER FOR A PROTESTANT PEOPLE: The *Irish Times* and the southern Irish minority

Ian d'Alton

WE IRISH PROTESTANTS have always had a reputation for appreciating the minutiae of social distinction. Often invisible to the outsider, this extended to such as our dogs, our yachts and, of course, our newspapers. My paternal grandmother was no exception. Her take on the relative pecking order of the Irish dailies was that one got one's news and views from the *Irish Times*, one lit the fire with the *Irish Independent*, and as for the *Irish Press* – ah! Delicacy forbids me to go into details, but suffice it to say that it involved cutting it into appropriate squares, and hanging these in the smallest room of the house!

In this paper I set the scene, as it were: to examine those who formed the *Times*' perceived audience for much of its existence – Irish Protestants, in particular those who were citizens of the Free State and the early Republic. And while Irish Protestantism, like Irish Catholicism, was by no means a monolith – not just Anglicans, not just unionists – it is recognised that being Church of Ireland and loyalist are its overwhelmingly dominant characteristics.

When Lawrence Knox founded the paper, Protestantism was still the predominant political and cultural force in the island, and for its first 60 years the paper was in tune with the polity of which it was part. Indeed, in 1859 Ireland was in a situation never to be repeated, with a majority of conservative MPs. Knox had chosen a propitious moment to launch what he described as a 'New Conservative Daily Paper' (O'Brien, 2008: 16) since, in the words of a landlord, 'country quiet, prices good, farmers prospering, rents well paid' (Hoppen, 1984: 164–5). By the *Times*' half-century, though even if landlordism was a busted flush, Protestants, with about a 10 per cent proportion in the 26 counties' population,<sup>1</sup> still punched far above their numeric weight. In 1911, close to 20 per cent of the managerial classes were Protestants. They accounted for nearly half the lawyers, over a third of doctors, and nearly three-quarters of bankers. By 1926, Protestants had declined to 7 per cent of the total, yet still comprised 40 per cent of lawyers, over 20 per cent of doctors and well over 50 per cent of bankers (McDowell, 1997: 5; Saorstat Éireann, 1926: 46–7, 54–5). Over a quarter of large farms were still in Protestant hands in 1926 (Saorstat Éireann, 1926: 50, 52; McDowell, 1975: 121–2).

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, 1912–13 (CD. 6051), cxvi 38–9. 'Protestants' are defined as members of the Church of Ireland, Methodists, Presbyterians and some minor Christian denominations – Ireland, *Census of Ireland 1991*, vol. 5. See [http://www.wesleyjohnston.com/users/ireland/past/protestants\\_1861\\_1991.html#decline\\_roi](http://www.wesleyjohnston.com/users/ireland/past/protestants_1861_1991.html#decline_roi): (consulted 22 December 2008).

This economically significant minority had a vital interest in how the new state approached taxation, business, education, the professions and the public service, and the *Times* reflected that interest. And long practice playing to a prosperous and literate constituency bore dividends. Even as the proportion of Protestants in the upper economic echelons declined from the 1920s, the newspaper astutely marketed itself towards those who took their places – the Catholic middle classes (Richardson, 2007: 17, 35, n.63; O'Brien, 2008: 165-166).<sup>2</sup>

If the economics broadly worked, politics was a trickier play. Fintan O'Toole (2009: 7) suggests, rightly, that 'the reality was that a unionist newspaper could never really avoid being a Protestant one'. If that was true, what about the converse which, in the new Ireland, was what really mattered? The eccentric genius of the *Irish Times*, edited and managed by eccentric geniuses, was its adaptive ability – mirroring, in many ways, the little-appreciated chameleon-like qualities of much of southern Protestantism. In this, the paper was much more successful than some of its peers. Adapt, or die. The Protestant unionist *Cork Constitution* newspaper, with its strident sectarian agenda, could not survive the change of regime in 1922 nor, indeed, could the *Freeman's Journal* on the other side of the fence, for somewhat different reasons (Larkin, 2006). The world of the *Irish Times* offers a proxy for the path that much of southern Irish Protestantism was to follow, itself becoming, as Mr O'Toole puts it 'an example of the virtues preached in its own leading articles, a solid, practical achievement by Protestants who, instead of standing aloof, threw themselves into the daily life of Ireland' (2009:7).

O'Toole's view is, though, I think, maybe slightly rosy. Reflecting the generality of southern Protestantism, the *Times* still possessed outsider status nearly half a century after independence. Indeed, under Smyllie and Douglas Gageby especially, it gloried in its contrarianism (O'Brien, 2008: 168-72, 18-85). But if the *Times* in particular, and Protestants in general, were still perceived as outsiders for so long, it is perhaps worth asking why. Was it a state imposed on them by the insiders, the Catholics? Or was it self-determined, a cocoon created to ensure that difference was maintained? Edward Said's argument is apposite – that nations are 'narrations ... The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging is very important' (Said, 1993: xiii). Despite a dominant plangent nationalism, a distinct Protestant narrative existed side-by-side right through to the 1970s. A Church of Ireland declaration in 1922 (*Church of Ireland Gazette and Family Newspaper*,<sup>3</sup> 21 July 1922) that 'we are Irish and Ireland is our home' might seem unexceptional, and could have been subscribed to by Sinn Féin. But Protestants and Catholics were divided by a common language; in 1922, that simple phrase contained a minefield of differing interpretations of 'we', 'Irish', 'Ireland' and 'home'. The *Irish Times* spent much of the succeeding half-century offering its particular interpretation to the majority on behalf of the minority.

Amongst most Catholics, there was simply a lack of appreciation of, or desire to understand, the subtleties and difficulties of the southern Protestant position, and of the existential angst that was often involved in trying to reconcile patriotism with nationalism. 'We cannot tell what political change lies before our country', sermonised the newly-elected archbishop of Dublin in July 1920, 'but one thing is cer-

<sup>2</sup> Richardson's article is an excellent analytical introduction to the history of the *Times*. <sup>3</sup> Henceforth, *COIG*.

tain, the Church of Ireland must never let itself be a stranger in Ireland' (Seaver, 1963: 105). This text could be applied equally to the way the *Times* eventually conducted itself under the new dispensation.

It was not an easy road. Southern Protestants were wounded beasts in 1922. However, in many ways, though, independence marked but a stage in a journey that had already been well under way since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The cascading effect of land agitation, Parnellism, resurgent Catholicism and – above all – the Gaelic cultural revival had already led to an Ireland whose narrative mad-deningly and inexplicably demanded their adherence to the nation and their exclusion from it at one and the same time. In 1916 Irish Protestants were looked upon, in the words of novelist Susanne Day, as 'illegitimate children of an irregular union between Hibernia and John Bull' (Day, 1916: 16). Crown and empire, in some measure, legitimised that existence; once gone, though, in the Anglo-Irish novelist Elizabeth Bowen's words, 'in the life of the new Ireland ... the lives of my own people become a little thing' (Bowen, 1984: 437). Not so little as to be happily left in peace – a significant part of the 32 per cent decline in the Protestant population of the Free State between the censuses of 1911 and 1926 (Saorstat Éireann, 1926: 46) was due to 'involuntary migration' in the 1920–3 period.<sup>4</sup> Irrelevance bore little value, but visibility had its price.

This kept them quiet for a long time. It is not surprising, really, that with a few exceptions – columnists in the more courageous Irish periodicals;<sup>5</sup> writers such as Hubert Butler and Yeats; and some prominent, but totally atypical, churchmen – Protestants tended to curl into a ball. Indeed, in the 1920s and 1930s their representatives often seemed, in public at any rate, to offer an unattractive, rather cloying, cosying-up to a state which many, in their hearts, despised (O'Halloran, 1987: 79–85). This was rooted in the realities. They had much to lose, and had nearly lost it. The economic position and educational privileges of the largely middle class southern Protestant were valuables well worth preserving by whatever means possible.<sup>6</sup> In the phrase of a later cleric, Protestants – as 'white mice' – were encouraged to keep a low profile (Seaver, 1963: 117).<sup>7</sup> Not for them the fictional Kate Alcock's words, from the playwright Lennox Robinson, in 1926: '... they're afraid of us still ... We

<sup>4</sup> See McDowell (1975: 119–23) for a detailed discussion of population trends between 1911 and 1926; Dr A. Bielenberg, as reported by Harris (2008), puts the proportion of the Protestant decline due to forced migration at about 37 per cent. In the case of Cork, nearly half its Protestant population was driven out or left in the period from 1920 to 1926, although they had seemed to have been relatively well-integrated with their Catholic neighbours (Hart, 1996: 81–94). See also Hart, (1998: 272–93, 307, 309, 314) and, for the situation in Monaghan, Dooley (2000). See also [http://www.reform.org/TheReformMovement\\_files/article\\_files/articles/cork.htm](http://www.reform.org/TheReformMovement_files/article_files/articles/cork.htm) (consulted 23 December 2008) for an informative, if slanted, analysis of the decline of Cork's Protestant population, 1919–23. Something quite similar had happened before, elsewhere: the 1920–3 period echoes 1798, especially in Co. Wexford (Dunne, 2004: 128, 186, 247–64). <sup>5</sup> For instance, the *Irish Statesman*, the *Bell*, the *Church of Ireland Gazette* – and, sometimes, the *Irish Times*. <sup>6</sup> On the decline of 'poor' Protestants see Maguire, (1995: 196–7). So also in Cork city – in 1845, just before the Famine – a Cork city Anglican cleric angrily wrote to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, about the 2,000 Protestant inhabitants in his parish of St Mary Shandon – 'hundreds of them in the greatest distress' (Neligan, 1845). One hundred and twenty years later, the author's Cork Church of Ireland Boy Scout troop, in a fit of Christian enthusiasm, did up some Christmas hampers for distribution to poor Protestant families in the city. We asked the Church of Ireland Dean of Cork to nominate deserving recipients. Despite his endeavors, and to his great embarrassment, he couldn't find any! On *economic conservatism*, see the career of Bryan Cooper, TD, an independent who held a 'unionist' Dáil seat until 1927 in south Dublin (Buckland, 1972: 299). <sup>7</sup> The phrase 'white mice' is a recent description – see letter from Rev. A. Carter, *CoIG*, 27 April 2007.

must glory in our difference, be of proud of it as they are of theirs' (Murray, 1982: 195–6).

Some became different in a different way, embracing parts of the nationalist narrative through such as a devotion to Gaelic. More commonly, though, the duty that had tugged insistently at Protestant sleeves before 1922 was no more; the new state apparently did not want them; and they could retreat sensibly into a private and near-invisible community of their schools, the stockbrokers, the freemasons, the churches and Trinity College, whilst writing letters to themselves in the *Irish Times*. Integration was not a necessity; even in a place like Cork city where less than 5 per cent of the population was non-Roman Catholic, it was still possible to live a Protestant life, and die a Protestant death, without entering into a Catholic world – born in the Victoria Hospital, attending Cork Grammar or Rochelle Schools, dating and mating in church-run (and church-vetted) dances and socials, employed by the Lee Garage or Lester's chemists, socialising amongst the freemasons and the choir of St Fin Barre's cathedral, playing hockey with Church of Ireland Hockey Club and rugby with Cork Constitution, spending old age in St Luke's Home for Protestant Incurables, buried by Cross's, undertakers.<sup>8</sup>

But there was a little more to it than this. Many southern Protestants, at least up to the 1950s, were as conservative as Catholics when it came to matters like divorce, abortion and the place of women in society and the family (Regan, 2001: 254; Pilkington, 2002: 125–33). Raging radicals they were not. If the likes of Smyllie, Yeats and Hubert Butler – sometimes as far removed from many of their co-religionists as from the mass of Catholics – imagined they led an army, it was often a conscript one, reluctant and uncomprehending. And even the *Irish Times*, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, may sometimes have got just a little ahead of its natural audience.

As against this, as Mark O'Brien has pointed out, the *Times* was frequently castigated as the voice of a bigoted, unreconstructed Protestantism. That this attitude was simplistic is demonstrated in the issues it was prepared to take on, and those it wasn't. Let me give you two examples from the same year, 1950. Early that year, the outcome of the Tilson child custody case – intimately connected as it was with the very survival of the caste – was seen as pivotal by Irish Protestants. Ernest Tilson was an Anglican who, under the *Ne temere* decree (1908), had signed the promise to raise his children as Roman Catholics. On the breakdown of his marriage, he made to renege on that promise. The Irish courts held that it was a legally enforceable contract, notwithstanding Protestant protests of duress. While not relying solely on the Irish constitution's Article 44 which stated the special position of the Catholic Church, the judgment – as Irish Protestants saw it – effectively enshrined Roman Catholic canon law in Irish jurisprudence (Lyons, 1971: 671 n.; Cooney, 1999: 245–56; Seanad Éireann, 1964). It coloured Protestant attitudes towards mixed education, in particular, for a generation. The case engendered considerable reaction in the newspaper, both editorially and by letter.<sup>9</sup> It spoke to the *Times's* ethic of a state unbiased towards any one religious viewpoint, as evidenced by the vigorous debate, also early in 1950, on what became known as 'The Liberal Ethic', in which it and its correspondents took on such

<sup>8</sup> I am indebted to Rev. Peter Hanna for this insight. <sup>9</sup> As recently as February 2006 there was evidence of the still differing opinions on Tilson, in a speech by the archbishop of Dublin, Rt. Rev. John Neill (*Irish Independent*, 6 February 2006). A film, *Evelyn*, starring Pierce Brosnan, and loosely based on the Tilson case, had a limited release in the US (13 December 2002) and the UK (21 March 2003).



well-known champions of Roman Catholic hegemony as J.P. Ryan, secretary of *Maria Duce*, and Westmeath County Council (O'Brien, 2008: 133–6).

Later that year, the promulgation of the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary provoked a very different response, or rather non-response.<sup>10</sup> The Church of Ireland, through a rare pastoral letter from its archbishops and bishops, issued a robust refutation of the new Article of Faith. But, reading the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, and its temporal counterpart, the *Irish Times*, what is striking is not the extent, depth and range of the adverse comments on the dogma, but rather their relative absence.<sup>11</sup> The aforementioned Tilson case had attracted much more attention, with extensive reports in the *Gazette* (*CoIG*, 1950) and numerous letters in the *Irish Times* during the last quarter of 1950. Why is this? We can adduce a couple of reasons. The obvious one is that the issue of the Assumption was esoteric, the arguments based on obscure early church history and difficult theology. Not the sort of stuff that would be the staple of loyalist pub-chat on the Shankill Road, nor even Saturday-night dinner parties in south Dublin – in a phrase, not likely to sell newspapers.

Again, in a conflict between the opportunity for a bit of Catholic-baiting and the sensible desire to keep heads down for fear of having them chopped off, the latter possibly predominated. The social, political and economic consequences of Catholicism were fair game, but purely religious topics were not. The furthest the *Times* would go is illustrated by its reaction to the 1932 Eucharistic Congress. The paper was impressed by what it called 'the unanimous and whole-hearted fervour' of Irish Catholics, while voicing a coded unease, in referring to the papal high mass, that they appeared to 'have no more ego in them than the sands themselves' (O'Brien, 2008: 73).

There is some fascinating, though hardly conclusive, evidence that the *Irish Times* may have deliberately decided to keep out of the controversy: one churchman complained in late 1950 that the newspaper had failed to publish a relevant letter to the editor. And the complete absence of any letters from the public is a little odd, to say the least – though a simpler explanation might be that, if there were any such letters the *Times* under Smyllie, its legendary, chaotic editor, may have simply mislaid them (Gray, 1991: 199–200). While it finally did publish the Archbishops' pastoral in full, it was not placed on the front page, but on page four, suspiciously juxtaposed with Myles na gCopaleen's satirical column 'Cruiskeen Lawn' (*Irish Times*, 11 December 1950). Maybe the newspaper had taken to heart a previous Archbishop of Dublin's admonition in 1920, at a time of great tension, that 'Singularity is never popular' (Seaver, 1963: 117).

On the Catholic side, provocative counter-attacks seemingly did not merit a response either. Alfred O'Rahilly's disparaging description of Anglican clerics as 'the prelates of this little man-made church' who 'could only be regarded by their flock as convenient officials under the constitution of 1870' did not elicit a riposte (Gaughan, 1993: 20–4; see also Stevens, 2007: 57). Even the nonagenarian Catholic bishop of Cork's mischievous suggestion, in his 1951 Lenten pastoral, that the Anglican archbishops of Armagh and Dublin were not qualified to discuss the finer points of Catholic theology being, in the sight of his Church, mere laymen (*CoIG*, 5 February 1951) was met with silence.

<sup>10</sup> A more extensive discussion, including the theological element, can be found in d'Alton (2009). <sup>11</sup> One letter relating to the Assumption appeared in each of *CoIG* on 13 October, 10 November, 1 December, 1950, 5 January, 16 February, 1951.



The half-century, then, saw southern Irish Protestantism on the back foot in the face of an aggressive and wholly intolerant Catholicism. Hospital control issues were always potential flashpoints and, in 1949, enthusiastic Roman Catholic doctors had taken over the governance of Mercer's Hospital by way of a legal putsch. Several Protestant medics subsequently resigned, or were sacked. It took a hasty combination of Archbishop McQuaid and a private member's bill in parliament to repair the damaged relations (Cooney, 1999: 243–4; Ó Corráin, 2006: 93–4). Also in that year, Protestants had had before them an image of the funeral of the former president of Ireland, Douglas Hyde, a member of the Church of Ireland. The cabinet, with one exception, did not attend the service, in obedience to Catholic Church rules. The poet Austin Clarke (1963) caught the atmosphere of legalism that made it such an embarrassment:

At the last bench  
Two Catholics, the French  
Ambassador and I, knelt down.  
The vergers waited. Outside.  
The hush of Dublin town,  
Professors of cap and gown,  
Costello, his Cabinet,  
In government cars, hiding  
Around the corner, ready  
Tall hat in hand, dreading  
*Our Father* in English. Better  
Not hear that 'which' for 'who'  
And risk eternal doom.<sup>12</sup>

A two-and-a-half pence stamp issued by the new republic in 1950 symbolised why Protestants might have felt *they* were still in the tuppenny-halfpenny league, as far as the state was concerned: it commemorated the Roman Catholic Holy Year, had St. Patrick and his arms, and bore the inscription 'Poblacht na h-Éireann'. There seemed little point in engagement with this Catholic-Republican unreconstructed construct. As late as 1956, the advice still offered by the *Church of Ireland Gazette* was that 'we should keep ourselves to ourselves and, if we speak, confine our remarks to platitudinous exhortations on non-controversial subjects...lest such attention should result in material or social disadvantages' (*CoIG*, 30 November 1956). Two years later, the general synod decided not to use the term 'Anglican', as it suggested 'a vague West British sound' (*CoIG*, 30 May, 1958).<sup>13</sup> Perhaps, as a later writer has put it, 'as a vestigial population in the new nation-state' Protestants instinctively felt that 'their citizenship was a matter of indulgence and not of right' and they should act accordingly (O'Neill, 2001: 326–7).

In this atmosphere, symbol often took the place of substance. The *Times* both followed and led the southern Protestant adoption, from the twenties to the sixties, of a narrative based largely on such symbolism, centred on a sentimental fealty to

<sup>12</sup> The reference in the last three lines is to the (then) different versions of the Lord's Prayer. <sup>13</sup> I am indebted to Rev. Dr Robert Tobin for this reference. Churches of the Church of Ireland now (2009) are happy to describe themselves on their notice-boards as 'Anglican.'

Crown and Empire. Spontaneous renderings of *God Save the King* at Armistice Day remembrances in 1931 and 1950 were rare public manifestations of a loyalty usually kept in-house, often in-church (McDowell, 1997: 170; *Irish Times*, 15 November 1950). Bishop Day of Ossory ordered special services to be held in his churches for the silver jubilee of King George V in 1935 (Hartford, 1940: 116–17). Up to the 1960s, southern Protestants may have listened to the Queen's Christmas broadcasts – but this was done strictly in private between consenting adults. Since the Church of Ireland's *Church Hymnal* was designed for use in both parts of Ireland, it today still contains the hymn *God Save the Queen*, but did not acquire a rubric – 'For use in Northern Ireland' – until as late as the year 2000.<sup>14</sup> Poppies sold to assist First World War veterans, and worn in the lapel, were a particular flashpoint. Republican poppy-snatchers in 1920s Dublin were painfully foiled by the young bucks of Trinity College, who threaded their poppies through razor-blades.

It helped that the public geography remained broadly congenial: even if Kingstown was now Dun Laoghaire, Kingsbridge was not yet Heuston; Nelson's Pillar was still the focal point of the capital; associations, clubs and professional bodies continued to carry the 'Royal' prefix; the postboxes had their royal ciphers, if now painted a fetching Hibernian green; and Dublin, pro-rata, still had twice the number of streets called after Queen Victoria than had London. And there was always the *Irish Times*. Its court and personal column, headed by the royal coat-of-arms, was a constant reminder of an emotional constancy, only removed in March 1942 as a result of wartime censorship (O'Brien, 2008: 108–11).

George Boyce (1988: 135) makes the point that 'Irish society was too divided on sectarian lines to enable any Protestant, however talented or committed, to enter into the experience of the other side'; but it can be held that the same was equally true of Catholics. Popular Catholic nationalism, whether through ignorance or design, found it difficult to comprehend an Irishness that involved notions of cultural Britishness, but a strong spatial loyalty to their particular bit of the island; political aloofness, but active economic engagement; a sense of moral individualism but a visceral tribal religiosity.<sup>15</sup> Understanding was not helped, though, by mutterings from some Anglicans that *they* were the true heirs of St Patrick and that their church, unlike *another*, was not subject to foreign control.<sup>16</sup> Count Plunkett (1897), like many nationalists, exhibited a simplistic view when he said in 1897: 'It should be left to England to snub them. That should make them Irishmen.' He was wrong. It was much more complex than that.

In 1953, the children of Cork Grammar School were compulsorily gathered to hear the live radio broadcast of the Coronation. A mere thirteen years later, the pupils were again required to assemble, but this time for a reading of the 1916 Proclamation of the Republic by the Head Prefect.<sup>17</sup> By 1966, then, the declaration

<sup>14</sup> See Terence Brown (2004: 102–37) for a wide-ranging discussion of the cultural fate of the minority community between the wars. <sup>15</sup> The historian Lecky had put it thus – 'I have never looked upon Home Rule as a question between Protestant and Catholic. It is a question between honesty and dishonesty, between loyalty and treason, between individual freedom and organised tyranny and outrage' (quoted in McDowell, 1997: 2).

<sup>16</sup> George T. Stokes argued for the lineal continuity of the Church of Ireland from what was portrayed as the independent Celtic Church pre-1172 – 'Irish national independence and Irish ecclesiastical independence, in fact, terminated practically together' (1928: 348). <sup>17</sup> For 1953 – information from Rev. P. Hanna, who was a pupil at CGS in 1953; for 1966 – personal information. Two students wore Union Jacks in their buttonholes

that 'We are Irish and Ireland is our home' could clearly bear a resonance of Irishness not amenable to earlier times. Southern Protestants were not just ripe plums waiting to fall into Caitlín Ní Houlihan's capacious apron; they were never a British ethnic minority that would mysteriously change into a docile Irish religious one, and the history of the *Times* is an emphatic reminder of that nuanced truth.

Would the *Times* have been missed, had it gone under at Independence? I think so. On the one hand, for southern Protestants it helped to supply an essential narrative of continuity, easing the ex-unionists into a tolerance – albeit often grudgingly – of the new Ireland. On the other, in a Free State that was, in many respects anything but free, it held fast to principles of personal responsibility and the questioning of verities almost single-handedly until at the last, in Roy Foster's rather provocative formulation, it was rescued by Catholics becoming Protestants.<sup>18</sup>

In one particular sense, it is a miracle that the *Irish Times* survived at all. At the other side of the wide road from the paper, the Palace Bar, in Fleet Street, was a favourite haunt of the hacks. Truly, a Protestant God must have been watching over them. How *were* large-scale casualties avoided in those daily inebriated meanderings across Westmoreland Street?

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at this latter event, but maintained that it was in protest at what they saw as the glorification of violence in the Proclamation, not its republican sentiments. <sup>18</sup> First articulated by Marie-Claire Charon (1998) and by Eddie Holt, in *Irish Times*, 18 November, 2000; Foster (2007: 37–66).

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# TABLOID SENSATIONALISM OR REVOLUTIONARY FEMINISM?

## The first-wave feminist movement in an Irish women's periodical

Sonja Tiernan

### Introduction

IN 1928 VIRGINIA WOOLF described idly reading a copy of an evening newspaper, observing that:

The most transient visitor to this planet, I thought, who picked up this paper could not fail to be aware, even from this scattered testimony, that England is under the rule of a patriarchy. Nobody in their senses could fail to detect the dominance of the professor. His was the power and the money and the influence. He was the proprietor of the paper and its editor and sub-editor. He was the Foreign Secretary and the judge. He was the cricketer; he owned the racehorses and the yachts. (1929: 50)

Woolf illustrated a simple fact: newspapers reflect the reality of a country's social, political and economic situation. By 1928 women had achieved many of the objectives of the first-wave of the feminist movement. They had secured political franchise in general elections, girls benefitted from improved access to education and working women were gradually experiencing better conditions in the workplace. However, Europe remained under the rule of a patriarchy and newspapers were controlled by men within that system.

The drive to secure votes for Irish women had begun in earnest in 1876 when Anna and Thomas Haslam founded the Dublin Women's Suffrage Association. Suffragists believed that the vote for women could be achieved through constitutional means. In order to promote the activities of the Suffrage Society, members often sought out journalists to cover stories of suffrage meetings, petitions and other society events. However, the activities of suffragists rarely inspired the dramatic headlines that sell newspapers. This situation changed at the turn of the twentieth century when a group of women in Britain, under the auspices of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), began staging militant and outrageous protests. Newspapers reacted by regularly printing details of their activities. Ireland soon followed suit and a militant suffrage organisation – the Irish Women's Franchise League – was founded by Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and Margaret Cousins in 1908.

The actions of militant feminist organisations were often reported in the newspapers of the time, creating an accessible archive for historians. If researchers were to document the history of feminism solely through newspaper sources, it is likely we

would now have quite a tainted view of the origins of the feminist movement; the first wave of which would be recalled as being led largely by militant bands of women who chained themselves to railings, disrupted political meetings and vandalised public property. Suffrage historian Jill Liddington has devoted decades to uncovering the histories of forgotten suffrage activities in Britain. In one of her earliest studies, written with Jill Norris, Liddington addresses the lack of primary source material available for such research. While newspapers generally provide vital information regarding the activities of, or attitudes towards, political movements, Liddington notes that:

Contemporary newspapers are not particularly helpful. It was a period when the mass circulation dailies, like the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily News* and the *Daily Mirror*, were building up tremendous readerships ... But of course non-militants seldom provided good copy; peaceful tactics seemed rather dull compared to slapping policemen on the face or being thrown out of Liberal party meetings, and unlike the suffragettes the radical suffragists seemed to fight shy of any kind of newspaper publicity. (Liddington and Norris, 1978: 16)

In a related article, 'Rediscovering Suffrage History' (1977), Liddington highlights the paucity of newspaper accounts of non-militant suffrage activities as a major concern for recovering an accurate and complete account of feminist history. The abundance of newspaper articles focusing on the militant activities of some feminist organisations at the turn of the twentieth century has had far reaching consequences. Reports in mainstream newspapers have almost defined the first wave of the feminist movement in the contemporary public imagination.

### ***Urania*: A Vital Historical Source**

Recognising the importance of propaganda, a group of radical thinkers led by the Irish poet and radical suffragist, Eva Gore-Booth, began to monitor newspapers in 1916. The group established their own periodical, *Urania*, in which they reprinted newspaper reports concerning gender equality. Studies of Gore-Booth's literature generally disregard this extraordinary journal, focussing instead on specific aspects of her mainstream literature – such as her plays (Lapisardi, 1991); her poetry (Ní Dhuibhne, 1995 and Donoghue, 1997); or her theosophical literature (Condren, 2002). Similarly, biographical studies such as those by R.M. Fox (1935), Rosangela Barone (1991) and Dermot James (2004), often overlook *Urania*. Specific studies on Gore-Booth which mention the journal often offer underdeveloped and frequently inaccurate readings, such as Gifford Lewis's joint biography of Gore-Booth and Esther Roper (1988) and John Hawley's biographical entry (2001). Alison Oram has recognised the importance of *Urania* as a journal of radical sexual theory and has written two articles in the context of British sexual culture (1998 and 2001). An article authored by Angela Ingram and Daphne Patai (1993) focuses on one of the editors of *Urania*, Thomas Baty.

The lack of intensive research on *Urania* is due mainly to the fact that original copies of the journal are difficult to source. No ordered catalogue of *Urania* exists, and the surviving seventy-three issues are distributed randomly across three different archives at the London School of Economics, the Women's Library at the



London Metropolitan University and the Glasgow Women's Library respectively. It has been shown to be valuable as an informative literary text (see Tiernan, 2008, 2008a, and 2009) and this article will evidence its importance as an historical source.

The study of *Urania* is part of ongoing work on a monograph biography of Eva Gore-Booth for a Government of Ireland post-doctoral fellowship. To date there is no such dedicated biography of Gore-Booth and therefore this research is principally based on primary source material. Newspapers and periodicals which record Gore-Booth's activities or provide a contextual base for her life have become an important aspect of this research and *Urania* is a vital historical resource in this regard.

This article traces Gore-Booth's turbulent relationship with the printed media from her early years in Sligo through to her final days in London. This account elucidates the reasons for Gore-Booth's having established *Urania* and how she employed it as an effective propaganda tool. The contents of the journal are described and it is identified as a radical archive of alternative feminist thought. Recent studies (for example, Mercer, 2005) have begun to examine propaganda as a vital aspect of the suffragette movement. From such research it is clear that propaganda was at the very heart the suffragette movement's militant activities. By contrast, the non-militant campaign received little if any media attention. This article will show that Eva Gore-Booth recognised the power of the media; an insight which prompted her to launch her own unique propaganda campaign.

### **The Gore-Booth Family and Social Reform**

Eva Gore-Booth was born into a landed aristocratic family in County Sligo in 1870. Like many Anglo-Irish families, the Gore-Booths received their land as a reward from the British crown for conquering and controlling its Irish inhabitants. Eva's generation of the Gore-Booth family was the first to question British rule over Ireland. Eva's older sister Constance Gore-Booth, later Countess Markievicz, dedicated her life to the fight for Irish independence. Eva's brother, Josslyn, became a key organiser of the co-operative movement, which emerged under the promotion of fellow Anglo-Irish landowner, Horace Plunkett. Eva was an avid supporter of Irish nationalism and appreciated the importance of economic reform; however, she became most interested in the campaign to achieve equality for women. In 1896 she met Esther Roper, a prominent suffrage activist from Manchester. Eva was inspired by Esther's politics and immediately set about organising a local campaign for women's franchise in Sligo.

Eva arranged a public meeting at Breaghwy Old School in Ballinfull in December 1896. There are no records of this meeting in the Gore-Booth family papers or amongst Eva's personal and political manuscripts. The only account of the meeting is contained in an issue of a local weekly newspaper, the *Sligo Champion*. The *Champion* confirms that it was decided at this meeting to establish the Sligo Women's Suffrage Association (19 December 1896: 9). Eva was elected Secretary, Constance was elected President and their younger sister Mabel was elected Treasurer of the Association. This was a significant development, as before this date the suffrage campaign in Ireland had had very little momentum. The Dublin Women's Suffrage Association had been inactive from 1886 to 1895. The society's annual report for 1896 maintains that this inactivity was due to 'the present condition of political controversy in Ireland, as well as other causes' (Crawford, 2006: 259).



By 1896 the DWSA had only 43 members (Cullen, 2009: 3). That same year the Women's Poor Law Guardian (Ireland) Act enabled Irish women who adhered to certain property qualifications to act and vote as Poor Law guardians. This slight improvement in women's access to the political sphere stirred the Association back into action. Members of the Dublin Association urged others to form local branches around the country. The Sligo Association was one of the first to be established.

#### **'Amusing Proceedings' in the *Sligo Champion***

Eva called the first official meeting of the Sligo Association on Friday 18 December 1896 at Milltown National Protestant School in Drumcliffe (*Sligo Champion*, 26 December 1896: 7). A complete account of the meeting was printed in the *Sligo Champion* of 26 December. The report, headlined 'The Women's Suffrage Movement' describes 'eloquent speeches for and against the question'. The subtitle of the article exhibits the journalist's prejudice on the issue, characterising the meeting as 'amusing proceedings'. This report includes the most wonderful detail about the first ever meeting of the Sligo branch of the Suffrage Association and provides a prime example of the importance of newspapers for historical research. Such detail would otherwise remain unknown. The journalist reports that the hall was packed with attendees, over two thirds of whom were men apparently against the idea of female suffrage. The walls of the meeting hall were decorated with banners carrying slogans and framed in evergreen foliage: 'Who would be free themselves must strike the blow'; 'No taxation without representation'; and 'Liberality, justice, and equality'.

The article relates details of each proposal made at the gathering and every response is noted. When a proposal was put forward to 'try to awaken in Irishwomen a sense of their responsibilities', the resolution was seconded by a Mr. E. Rowlette. There were several moves in opposition presented by various men in the crowd. Unshaken by a boisterous response Eva took the chair and was received with warm applause. She brought the meeting to order and made a forthright resolution that she and the Society 'demand ... the extension of the parliamentary franchise to women'. Inspired by the success of her brother's local co-operative creamery, she called on 'Irishwomen to follow the example of the farmers of Drumcliffe, and to insist, in spite of opposition, in taking affairs into their own hands'. At this point the crowd reportedly became rowdy in appreciation and someone shouted 'We'll back you up Miss', while another voice called out, 'Three cheers for Lissadell.' Lissadell was the Gore-Booth family estate and was one of the largest estates in the West of Ireland, covering nearly 32,000 acres. Eva's father was a powerful landlord, local employer and MP for the county – it is little wonder, then, that the *Sligo Champion* published a long and favourable report of a suffrage meeting held by three female members of his family.

The national newspapers adopted a different approach when reporting the event. The *Irish Times* ridiculed the Sligo Suffrage Society's meeting in a column entitled 'Talk of the Town' authored by 'A Lady'. The events are narrated as 'an amusing account [which] comes all the way from Sligo of a meeting held there by three young ladies, "all on their own responsibility"' (*Irish Times*, 30 January 1897: 4). The Gore-Booth sisters are mocked through a description of their privileged lifestyle. In Sligo 'they ride to hounds and otherwise demonstrate their personal courage and physique – and in London ... they are members of several societies and clubs, and share in all

the intellectual life of the town' (*Irish Times*, 30 January 1897: 4). It is clear from such news reports that Eva's actions would never be judged objectively in Ireland. Journalists reporting for both the *Champion* and the *Times* were swayed by the fact that she was a member of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy. It is not surprising that the national newspapers did not take the meetings seriously, as the suffrage movement certainly did not seem relevant in Ireland at the time. It was mainly controlled by educated middle class women who sought equality with men. Achieving the vote for women who owned property would not impact on the lives of many Irish women nor would it gain Irish independence from Britain.

Some months later Eva made a decision which changed the course of her life forever and which profoundly affected the lives of countless others. In 1897 she rejected her privileged lifestyle at Lissadell and moved to the industrial quarters of Manchester, where she witnessed first-hand the social problems caused by industrialisation there. She immersed herself in social reform activities, determined to better the lives of the working classes in Manchester; a high percentage of whom were Irish refugees. She joined the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and established various organisations and trade unions to improve the lives of working class women. Eva campaigned for her various causes through constitutional means. She organised petitions to the House of Commons, staged rallies and led a focused campaign of letter writing to various newspapers. In this way she befriended C.P. Scott – a local MP, an avid supporter of Irish home rule and the editor of the somewhat avant-garde *Manchester Guardian* newspaper.

### **The Daily Mail Suffragette**

According to various newspaper reports in Manchester, Eva was a successful suffrage campaigner and enlisted thousands of dedicated supporters. One noteworthy ally was Christabel Pankhurst, whom Eva mentored from 1901 until 1904. Christabel's mother, Emmeline Pankhurst, founded the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903. The WSPU influenced the way in which newspapers reported on suffrage activities. In 1905, Emmeline Pankhurst warned then British Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, 'that if facilities for the passing into law of the Women's Enfranchisement Bill were not granted, the WSPU would work actively against the Government at the next General Election' (Pankhurst, 1931: 15). Balfour was not moved into action by this threat and so the WSPU began a campaign of militancy in October 1905.

Within days of Emmeline's threat Christabel and another WSPU member, Annie Kenney, arrived at a Liberal party meeting at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. The women, holding a WSPU banner, put the question to MP Edward Carson: 'Will the Liberal government give votes to women?' When he did not reply, the two women loudly repeated their question; again, he did not reply. Christabel and Annie began heckling the speakers from the gallery. The women were dragged from their seats and brought outside where they addressed a gathered crowd. Christabel was intent on being arrested to highlight the suffrage cause. As she writes in her book *Unshackled*:

I was in the grip of a policeman and surrounded by stewards. I thought I must bring the matter into Court, into prison. For simply disturbing the meeting I should not be imprisoned. I must 'assault the police.' But how was I to do it? The police seemed to be skilled to frustrate my purpose. I could

not strike them, my arms being held. I could not even stamp on their toes. Yet I must be arrested. The vote depended on it. With my limbs helpless, I decided to be arrested for spitting at a policeman. (1959: 128)

The two women were arrested and ordered to appear for sentencing the next day. Christabel was charged with 'spitting at a police superintendent and a police officer and hitting the latter in the mouth' (*Times*, 16 October 1906: 4). Both women were fined and after refusing to pay were transferred to Strangeways prison. This case gained the desired effect and attracted huge media interest. It was the first time that suffrage campaigners had adopted militant tactics and the first time a member was imprisoned. The media attention positively impacted on the WSPU, and their membership grew.

Balfour resigned before the end of the year and a general election was called for January 1906. Two days before the election the *Daily Mail* reported that 'it was not surprising that Mr. Balfour should receive a deputation of the Suffragettes' (10 January 1906). This is the first recorded use of the term suffragette; a new and rather unflattering term used to describe women who adopted militant tactics in pursuit of the female franchise. In contemporary popular discourse the term suffragist – a non-militant campaigner – is often confused with the term suffragette.

From 1906 on Irish newspapers carried numerous reports of suffragette activities in Britain. In March of that year the *Daily Mirror* dedicated an entire front page to the women of the WSPU. Over the next decade suffragettes became increasingly frustrated with the campaign's lack of progress. The WSPU's militant activities became more radical, as evidenced by a report in the *Leitrim Observer* with the headline 'Cathedral Desecrated by Women'. The article describes how suffragettes broke into an English Cathedral and 'daubed [messages] in white paint over the pillars, floors, pew fronts, side galleries ... Even the beautiful Burne-Jones window was not respected. The words "Votes for Women" were painted across the middle' (28 March 1914: 3). From newspaper reports it is clear that suffragette activity in Ireland increased around this time. The *Irish Times* reports that eight members of the Irish Women's Franchise League were arrested for breaking windows in government buildings (14 June 1912). The next month a number of headlines in the Irish *Sunday Independent* relate how Dublin was thrown into disarray at various stages. One such article simply announces that the suffragettes are 'At It Again' (28 July 1912: 5).

Suffragette activities were not purely acts of targeted vandalism. Groups of women instigated highly organised operations in order to cause public disruption and gain recognition for their plight. Newspapers constantly covered these stories in a negative light. A campaign in 1913 to tamper with the mail in Dublin saw the *Freeman's Journal* announce, 'Letters Destroyed; Suffragette Outrage at Dublin Pillar Boxes'. The article details how numerous postboxes on Haddington Road and Fitzgibbon Street were damaged by corrosive acid (17 December 1913: 7). Such newspaper articles alienated the suffragettes from public sympathy. Reports rarely analysed why suffragette activities were becoming increasingly militant; instead articles tended to focus on the disruption caused.

Irish republican journalists often denigrated Irish suffragettes for aligning with English activists. An article in the Irish weekly paper the *Leader* notes that 'the movement in Ireland smacks rather of imitation of the English, and we do not regard

it as a native and spontaneous growth' (19 March 1910). D.P. Moran, editor of the *Leader*, used the derogatory terms 'Suffs' and 'Suffers' to describe the suffragettes (Cullen-Owens, 1984: 45). Negative news reporting had far-reaching consequences for the suffrage campaign. Months after the postbox operation a group of Irish suffragettes wrote to MP John Redmond 'asking for an interview during his stay in Ireland'. Redmond declined, stating that 'he received several [suffragettes] in the past which only led to unpleasantness' (*Irish Independent*, 6 June 1914: 5).

### ***Urania: An Alternative Media Archive***

From 1906 onwards newspaper articles sensationalised militant suffragette activity; stories of women attempting to blow up castles or destroying public property sold newspapers. Although suffragists continued to campaign for political franchise using non-militant tactics, these activities did not sell newspapers and were rarely reported on. This void in reportage – largely created through bias – means that historians have access to an abundance of news reports about suffragette activities, but very little on non-militant feminist campaigns. That said, newspapers are undeniably valuable when recording the history of the women's movement. Through research of newspapers alone it is possible to gain vital information regarding the social, political and economic history of a country.

As the National Library attests, newspapers 'provide a contemporary commentary of the major occasions in the political, religious, sporting and cultural life of the nation'. They are:

... a major source of information on everyday life. Advertisements, reports of social events, accidents, court proceedings and inquests, all the mundane and exciting details that made up the daily lives of our ancestors are recorded in newspapers. ([www.nli.ie](http://www.nli.ie))

Through articles concerning court proceedings and social events it is often possible to document the development of the radical ideals which enhanced the progress of the first wave feminist movement. Aware of this, a group of radical thinkers, led by Eva Gore-Booth, began to monitor the printed media. The group included Esther Roper, suffrage activist; Dorothy Cornish, a Montessori educator; Jessey Wade, an animal rights campaigner, and Thomas Baty, an international legal scholar. Under the direction of Eva they established the periodical *Urania* in 1916. This remarkable journal reprinted newspaper articles concerning gender equality.

*Urania* constitutes an alternative archive of radical feminist thought which demonstrates the possibility of using periodicals and newspapers as a vital source for uncovering history. The journal was privately printed and circulated until 1940. Unfortunately it has not been possible to source a distribution list, but the journal boasted a circulation of over two hundred and fifty. As with any newspaper circulation, the readership would have been significantly higher than this figure, especially given that many university libraries subscribed to *Urania* – amongst them Girton, Newnham and Lady Margaret Colleges in Britain, and Vassar and Wellesley in America (*Urania* 14, 1919: 3). The principles expressed in *Urania* thus reached hundreds of intellectuals with every issue. Initially the journal was published bi-monthly, however due to increased printing costs publication was reduced in 1921 to three times a year.

*Urania* did not simply reproduce press clippings. The journal is carefully written and edited, and each year a detailed index of the journal's content was compiled, suggesting that the editors were assembling *Urania* as an alternative archive. Most issues contain editorial comments on the reprinted newspaper reports. In their original context in mainstream national and local newspapers these reports were intended to be sensational. Stories of boys who mysteriously changed into girls or women who cross-dressed as men were included in newspapers as a form of scandalous amusement. In *Urania*, the sensationalism was significantly altered through a careful process of analysis and editing.

Each issue follows a similar pattern. The journal opens with a quotation from a poem or a psalm, followed by an editorial commentary, then a letter section, book reviews, and progress reports on co-educational schools. Various reprinted articles from Britain, Ireland, India and Japan follow. Most issues include a 'Star Dust' section. This section comprises republished newspaper articles from around the world, placed under different headings including 'Military', 'Business', 'Athletics', 'Academic', 'Dress', 'Art' and 'Music'. Women who had achieved success in traditionally male areas – the first woman to receive a BA in science, the first female doctor in a certain speciality and so on – feature frequently.

Articles in the Star Dust section did not simply list an increase of women in certain occupations; they were chosen to highlight the fact that innate differences do not exist between the sexes. This was of prime importance at a time when women's access to career and educational opportunities was restricted on the grounds of perceived biological inadequacy. One such article listed under 'Athletics' exhibits *Urania's* unique approach. The case of nineteen-year-old Mitsuko Sakamoto – who woke to discover a burglar in her bedroom – notes how Sakamoto:

...with a deft twist of her soft hands took [the burglar] ... off his feet and placed him on a quite unrelated part of his anatomy. Not caring for this pose, she tried him in another position, which brought his face into violent contact with the mat ... Sakamoto, as the burglar now knows, has devoted much of her time to the study of jujutsu. (*Japan Advertiser*, 22 March 1926)

As originally published in the pages of the *Japan Advertiser* this story would have been sensationalised. *Urania's* including this report in their Athletics section alters the significance of the story. The message in *Urania* is clear: women can achieve the positive aspects of masculinity, such as assertiveness and strength, while overcoming the negative feminine characteristics of passivity and weakness.

In addition to republished items, there are many original articles, some of which strike directly at the aspirations of the mainstream suffragette movement. One such article discusses the British general election of December 1918, which was a turning point for both suffragists and Irish nationalists. It was the first time that women were allowed to vote in a British general election and it was the first time that the vote was given without a property qualification, dramatically increasing the Irish electorate. The election resulted in a coalition of Conservatives, Liberals and a minority number of Labour and Independent MPs forming a government led by Lloyd George as Prime Minister. The old Irish political party was virtually wiped out in the election and the Irish republican party, Sinn Féin, was victorious at the

polls. This election had a special significance for Eva because her sister, Constance Markievicz, stood for election as a Sinn Féin candidate for St. Patrick's Division of Dublin. Constance triumphed at the polls and became the first woman ever to be elected to the British House of Commons. In line with Sinn Féin policy, Constance refused to swear allegiance to the British throne and therefore rejected her seat at Westminster.

Christabel Pankhurst stood for election in the Smethwick constituency of Staffordshire as a Women's Party candidate. She had established the Women's Party with Emmeline Pankhurst following the dissolution of the WSPU in 1917. She was defeated by 778 votes. Therefore, in the first British election to grant women the vote only one woman was elected to Parliament and she refused to take her seat. This must have been a bitter disappointment for the suffragette movement; a fact that the editors of *Urania* gloried in.

An article in *Urania* signed by the pen name Irene Clyde was published in January 1919, directly after the vote count. Clyde points out that gaining votes for women was not a suffragette victory; rather it was a political move in an election campaign. The article announces with delight Countess Markievicz's election as MP and her refusal to attend Westminster. Clyde rejoices in Christabel's defeat on the grounds that that lady would likely 'do something wild', which would be duly reported in the newspapers:

Entry into the polling-booth of course meant entry into Parliament. For the Coalition relied on the feminine vote and saw that it got it. Christabel Pankhurst nearly won: the most sedate publicists are to be found wishing she had quite won. They would like to have had the novel and inexpensive sensation of a lady member. Perhaps they were not without hope that Christabel would sooner or later do something wild which would set back the feminine clock. (*Urania* 13, 1919: 2)

### Women as Men: Gender as Performance

Newspaper articles were chosen carefully for inclusion in *Urania*. Articles were reprinted to prove that women could, if given the opportunity, accomplish the same things as men. Of course, women were rarely afforded the same opportunities as men in the 1920s – unless they assumed a male appearance. Historically there is evidence to suggest that women cross-dressed for various and often practical reasons: to find employment; to access education; to protect themselves; or to travel. The editors of *Urania* were fascinated by accounts of women who masqueraded as men and they reprinted newspaper reports of such cases. In their original context these newspaper articles would have provided light entertainment or a sensational read. The intention behind reprinting these articles with editorial comment was threefold. Firstly, to show that women could achieve anything if they were not constrained by their socially expected gender behaviour and the legal restrictions of the era. Secondly, to highlight that gender was not innately linked to sexed bodies; it was simply a masquerade, a performance which either gender could overturn. Finally, cross-dressing highlighted the fact that people were not always content with their assigned gender and consequently chose to adopt the opposite role.

The most detailed article on this subject has the title 'Women as Men' and was



originally written by Edwin Arnold for the *Weekly Scotsman* (*Urania*, 69 & 70, 1928: 4). The article provides a detailed and favourable portrayal of twelve individual women who masqueraded as men. One of the first accounts is of Irish born James Barry. Arnold notes that Barry became

Inspector-General of hospitals, fighting several duels during his career, making love to women, bullying the War Office of the time, no one doubting that he was a masterful and high-spirited man until 'he' died.

After Barry died it was discovered when 'his' corpse was laid out, that 'he' was in fact biologically a woman. In fact James Barry was the first female doctor in England. This alters the record of history – Elizabeth Garrett Anderson is listed as the first female to graduate in medicine. Anderson graduated in 1865 – the same year that Barry died. No London newspaper carried her obituary, but on 14 August, 1865 a Dublin paper, *Saunders's News-Letter and Daily Advertiser*, published an account under the heading 'A Female Army Combatant'.

'Women as Men' also details accounts of cross-dressing from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – something which appears to have inspired the editors of *Urania* to keep a detailed record of cross-dressers within their own era. The editors trawled through newspaper reports of such cases and printed a tally in a 1931 issue with the title 'And Many More?' The article celebrates a total of twenty-six 'cases of highly successful assumption of the dress and habits of the contrary sex in our own day'. These cases were often reprinted from mundane court case reports such as the case of 'Colonel Sir Victor Barker'. Barker was summoned to court on a bankruptcy charge, and having failed to show was arrested on 28 February 1929 (Doan, 2001: 222 n17). Upon a medical examination at Brixton prison, Barker was discovered to be female and was transferred to Holloway women's prison.

### Marriage in the News

Highlighting gender as performance was a key objective of *Urania*. The editors of the journal advocated for the deconstruction of gender and sexuality. Within this remit the institution of marriage was recognised as a system at the very heart of gender stereotyping. The idea of political spinsterhood became a realistic choice when the feminist movement achieved suffrage for women. Political franchise saw the establishment of many rights for women, including the right of access to education. Women entered professional careers and gained financial independence from men; often they chose a career rather than matrimony. These independent career women were commonly referred to as 'New Women' in the early twentieth-century. The rise in the number of spinsters caused societal concern, especially in regard to the birth rate, with women expected to replenish a decreasing population. Historian Lillian Faderman points out that 'the "redundant" or "superfluous" woman, which is what unmarried women were called in nineteenth-century England, became a social problem of vast proportions' (1981: 178). Unmarried women became the focus of sexological research, which in turn contributed to the expression of anti-spinster sentiment in mainstream newspapers. In retaliation *Urania* reprinted articles from newspapers which challenged the prevailing negative notion that women who remained unmarried were simply undesirable.



One such article reprinted from the *Exchange* and entitled 'Why We Marry' confronts the idea that due to a lack of prospective husbands after Word War 1, undesirable women remained unmarried against their will:

Although there are 2,000,000 surplus women in England, do not let us run away with the idea that these are all spinsters against their wills. No. Some of the most-sought-after women never marry and some of the least-sought-after do. Among the women who have not married will be found some of the most charming, the most attractive, and the best-looking of their sex. (*Urania* 51 & 52, 1925: 2)

From the outset articles relating to marriage appeared in *Urania*. One of the earliest recorded is in an issue from 1919; one year after Marie Stopes published her book *Married Love*. *Urania* reprinted an article from the *London Evening News* headed, 'Do Unmarried Women Miss the Half of Life?' The commentary argues that single women have a rounder, fuller life than their married counterparts: 'It is the married woman who too often only sees one side of life – the domestic side. The single woman sees all the others, and she knows as much as she wants to know of the married woman's preserve ... To very few single women love has not come with all its broadening education' (*Urania* 14, 1919: 6). This article offered a challenge to Stopes's book, which although controversial at the time of publication, expressed a conventional morality. Where *Married Love* offers the view that marriage is the ideal state for women and that 'marriage should be crowned by children' (McKibbin, 2004: i), *Urania* portrays spinsterhood as the ideal state for women, and emphasises the fact that unmarried women are not exempt from finding love.

The editors of the journal pursued a campaign to represent marriage as a bad institution, especially for women. *Urania* included vivid articles aimed to shock, such as an account reprinted from Stella Benson's column in the *London Star*. In this article Benson describes a scene she witnessed while visiting a small rural village in South China. Benson passed a bridegroom waiting by the side of the road. She describes 'a tall, heavy man ... wearing a long black robe' (*Urania* 49 & 50, 1925: 3). Half a mile further down the road, Benson encounters the bride, a girl approximately fourteen years old, travelling in the back of a 'peasant's dung-cart ... still encrusted with dung'. The article continues:

... [the bride] was crying into a magenta cotton handkerchief – not so much crying as screaming with terror, shuddering and holding out her disengaged hand to her mother. The mother, also crying but saying nothing, was dressed in a black robe and hood; she sat beside the victim ... trying to sooth her, caressing and clasping the brightly-colored shaking shoulders. Behind the cart walked three or four men and boys of the family, solemn, but, in expression, entirely remote from the affair, paying no apparent attention to the wild and childish roaring of the bride. (*Urania* 49 & 50, 1925: 3)

By reprinting this profoundly sad article in *Urania* the editors were determined to vividly expose marriage as a sham which survived mainly because it was the culturally expected norm.

In an attempt to prove that marriage was becoming redundant the editors of *Urania* monitored marriage and birth rates throughout the world, celebrating when a reduction was experienced. In 1930 it featured an unsigned article entitled 'Marriage Decline in France' which notes that the number of marriages dropped by 1,600 between 1927 and 1928. The article offers an explanation for the decrease in marriage rates:

There are many reasons for this. An important one is that since the war the young French girl is more independent than before. She is entering the professions, business, special branches of industries and is even accepting manual labour. Women who got jobs in the subway or on the street-cars when the male population was at the front, have kept them. (*Urania* 81 & 82, 1930: 2)

An article in a 1930 issue provides an exception to *Urania's* focus on unmarried women. The article, entitled 'Ireland Leads the World' states that 'the Irish Free State has a higher percentage of unmarried men than any other country, according to figures recently issued by John Hopper, Director of Statistics' (*Urania* 79 & 80, 1930: 2). The reports did not just concentrate on Europe. In a 1926 issue *Urania* refers to a survey in Japan of sixth year local elementary schools (*Urania*, 57 & 58, 1926: 3). In a piece titled 'Not Maternity, Thank You!' figures are quoted that indicate that 65 per cent of girls want to 'strive for women's rights and become leaders in society. Only 2.32 per cent say that they hope to become wives and mothers.'

*Urania* even printed announcements of broken engagements. One such article appears in a 1929 issue, announcing: 'The marriage arranged between Captain Geoffrey Fielden and Miss Jean Anderson will not take place' (*Urania* 77 & 78, 1929: 11). This announcement was first published in the *Cumberland News*, as it involved a high profile family. Captain Fielden was the son of a Manchester Exchange MP. *Urania* reprinted the news as a cause for celebration.

### Conclusion

Many of the articles in *Urania* originally appeared in mainstream newspapers, where they were often viewed as comical tabloid sensationalism. These articles were in essence meant to amuse the reader, and certainly not meant to inform or to educate. When the same articles were published together in a journal, with an editorial commentary, the content was expected to impact differently on readers. The editors of *Urania* carefully monitored and printed figures relating to marriage and birth rates, the employment and education of women, and cases of transvestism and transsexuality. These facts and figures now provide historians with an alternative archive of radical feminist thought. This is a remarkable feat considering that in 1928 Virginia Woolf described finding only rare references to women in her newspaper. Perhaps Woolf would have been surprised to learn that the editors of *Urania* managed to extract and reprint newspaper articles related to gender equality in a periodical which survived for over twenty-four years, spanning three decades.

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*Manchester Guardian*  
*Saunders's News-Letter and Daily Advertiser*  
*Sunday Independent*  
*The Exchange*  
*The Irish Times*  
*The Leader*  
*The London Star*  
*The Sligo Champion*  
*The Times*  
*The Weekly Scotsman*

# 'TO ENLIGHTEN AND ENTERTAIN'

## Adventure narrative in the *Our Boys* paper

Michael Flanagan

### Introduction

THE FORM OF POPULAR LITERATURE known as the 'Boys Own' genre, developed in the latter decades of the 19th century and relates directly to certain concerns around the contemporary viability and perceived future of the Empire. The Boys Own genre was conceived as a response to the corrupting influence of the Penny Dreadful, with the first edition of the *Boy's Own Paper* issued in 1879. *Boy's Own* was soon followed by such papers as *Gem*, *Magnet*, *Boys of the Empire* and *British Bulldog* (Turner, 1948). These magazines were intended to supply the newly evolving middle-class of suburban England with suitable reading material for the next generation of young men, imbuing them with the qualities necessary for leadership in the fields of the business world, the church, the army and the navy. They were thus placed to join what the historian Martin Green (1980: 336) describes as 'the Aristo-Military Elite' who took their place as governors of Britain and the empire.

It should not be surprising that the material of the genre should reflect the concerns of this class and those who aspired to join it. These were conveyed through direct moralising, through public school stories, through sport and most importantly through the adventure story. These, generally in an exotic imperial setting, ranging from the jungles of Africa to the souks of Arabia, the baking plain of India, and the snowy wasteland of the Arctic, provided the backdrop whereby class, gender and British nationalist concerns might be passed on.

Launched by the Christian Brothers in 1914 to compete with the perceived imperialist propaganda of these British boys' papers, and driven by the dual mission 'to enlighten and entertain' Irish children, *Our Boys* was a highly successful publishing enterprise which at one stage of its long existence (it ceased publication in the 1990s) outsold all other magazines combined in this country, becoming a veritable institution in the process of Irish boyhood. The influence of this magazine was to extend beyond the boundaries of Ireland as it was made available to the Irish communities of England, Australia, the US and even India, where it was distributed through the Christian Brothers' schools.

Support for the revival of the Irish language, the GAA and the economic ideology of Irish Ireland in *Our Boys* placed the paper firmly in the vanguard of separatist thinking at a pivotal stage of national events. This was part of the rationale behind the foundation of this magazine: instilling an impressionable generation of Irish youth with the principles of nationalism, encouraging them to see themselves as uniquely

Irish rather than British, outlining the manner in which such nationalist idealism might be expressed and fostering their growing sense of Gaelic self-identity. Even Irish music was harnessed in this campaign: Irish ballads, many of which had a nationalist orientation, featuring extensively in the magazine.<sup>1</sup> The paper repositioned itself in the Free State era, lending its support to the conservative moral agenda of the Catholic church in such initiatives as the 'Campaign Against Evil Literature' of the 1920s.<sup>2</sup>

The late 1920s also witnessed the first appearance of a character who was to become an institution among *Our Boys* readers – Victor O'D. Power's perennial favourite, Kitty the Hare, the traveling storyteller of Munster, heroine of the long-running serial (1924 to 1990) *Tales Told in the Turflight* (Flanagan, 2010). Historical fiction in *Our Boys* drew on the events of Ireland's past, filtered through the prism of Catholic/nationalist experience: episodes of anti-Catholic persecution were particularly popular, having a latent resonance for the Home Rule and independence struggle that dominated Irish politics for the first decade of the magazine's existence. Thus, the Cromwellian era became a standard setting as it allowed for a clear and unambiguous expression of the suffering of Irish Catholics at the hands of ruthless Roundheads. An example of this form of narrative would be *The Childstealers* (1917 to 1920), a long-running serial concerning the capture and enslavement of Irish children for a life of toil on the sugar plantations of the West Indies. Brother Canice Craven, who edited the magazine during the War of Independence and beyond, also drew on contemporary events for fictional material and during this period there were stories that featured hunger-strikes and the adventures of nationalist youth who were not afraid to oppose the British occupation of Ireland.

For all its stated mission to 'enlighten and entertain' with a pronounced emphasis on Irish Catholicism (the missionary was a common role model), the Irish paper also offered its readers the full range of conventional adventure stories that were available in its British counterparts. There was, however, one crucial difference in the manner in which the Christian Brothers presented this material: the heroic figure whose exploits dominated these tales was, more often than not, Irish – cowboys, detectives, school boys and even space explorers were all indigenous figures with whom Irish boys could identify, a nationalist version of the 'stiff upper lip' tradition of British adventure narrative. Thus the deeds of Sergeant Maloney of the Mounties, O'Malley the International Detective, the perennial schoolboy, Murphy (who first appeared in the pages of *Our Boys* in the 1940s) and Professor O'Callaghan and his fellow space explorers offered Irish boys local heroes with whom they could identify.

### The School Story

A boy enters school in fear and trepidation, but usually with ambitions and schemes; suffers mildly or seriously at first from loneliness, the exactions of fag-masters, the

<sup>1</sup> For a broader outline of this see Michael Flanagan, 'For the Triumph of the Patriot Arms – The Christian Brothers, Our Boys and Militant Nationalism in Irish Popular Culture, 1914–1922' in Karen Vandeveldt (ed.), *New Voices in Irish Criticism 3* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002). Also published in the United States in Patrick Doan (ed.), *Working Papers in Irish Studies* (Florida: Nova Southeastern University, 2001). <sup>2</sup> See Michael Flanagan, 'Republic of Virtue: Our Boys, the Campaign against Evil Literature and the Assertion of Catholic Moral Authority in Free State Ireland' in Linda King and Elaine Sisson (eds), *Negotiations: Modernity, Design and Visual Culture in Ireland 1922–1992* (C.U.P., forthcoming, October 2010).

discipline of masters and the regimentation of games; then makes a few friends and leads for a year or so a joyful, irresponsible and sometimes rebellious life; he eventually learns duty, self-reliance, responsibility and loyalty as a prefect, qualities usually used to put down bullying or overemphasis on athletic prowess; and he finally, with regret, leaves school for a wider world, stamped with the seal of an institution which he has left and devoted to its welfare.

This is the conventional format of the public school story. Behind this brief outline there are, however, many variations. During the inter-war period it is considered by many commentators that while the institution of the public school itself came in for much criticism as a bastion of outdated concepts of privilege and class, the genre of the school story was to reach new heights of popularity across the class structure, representing an ideal of masculinity which appealed to millions of boys in Britain and Ireland who would never have the opportunity to attend such an institution (Mack, 1941).

In 1921 D.C. Thomson of Dundee entered the market for boys' papers. What became known as the Dundee publications, which included the *Rover*, the *Wizard* and the *Hotspur*, went on to capture the imagination of boys in all parts of these islands and achieved massive circulation figures against a background of trade slump and labour depression. The school story was a highly popular element of the Thomson style of publishing and it is remarkable the extent to which their range of topics and those of the *Boys Own Paper* share the same basic thematic structure.

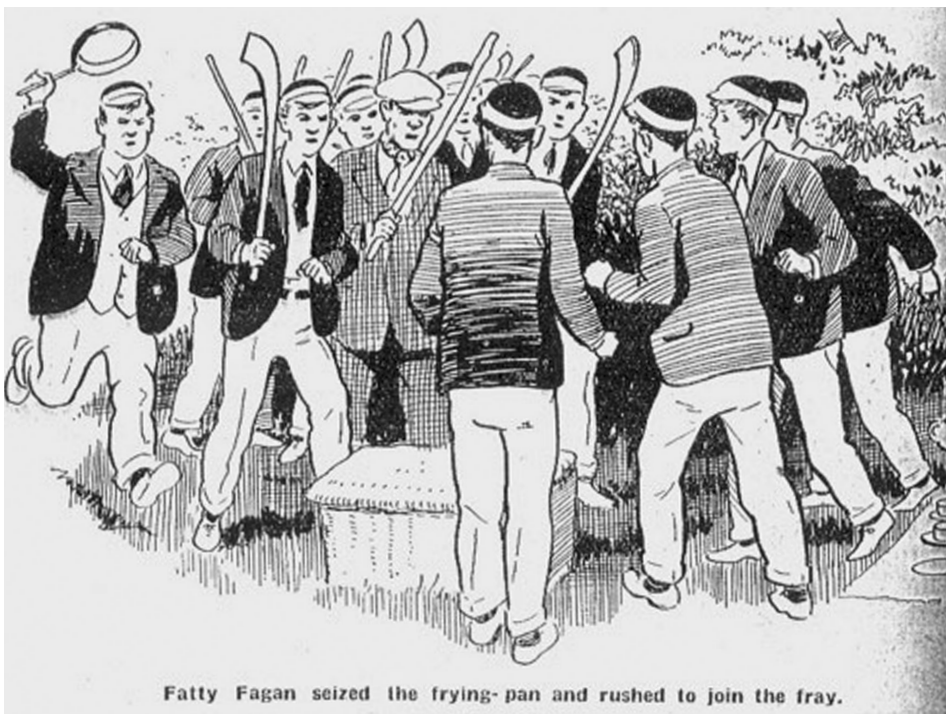
There were two principal methods of presenting this genre. One was to take a school as the initial starting point and treat the protagonists as characters who revolved around this central focal point, complete with ivy-clad walls and venerable towers. The second was to take one individual boy, allow him to be the centre of activity and have the other elements – staff, allies, enemies and the building itself – become subject to a series of events in which his personal experience was the chief catalyst. Examples of the former style of school story from the British tradition include such famous institutions as St Frank's, St Jim's and Greyfriars. Individual boys who went on to have stories dedicated to themselves include Harry Wharton and, of course, Billy Bunter. Harry Potter, a modern version of the standard school story, albeit with the addition of a magical element to the narrative structure, may be said to be an example of this also.

In *Our Boys* we find that the narrative conventions of the Irish version of the genre were little different from the public school material as circulated in the British magazines available in Ireland. The boys did play hurling or Gaelic football, but they also played cricket and rugby. In general they existed in the same male-dominated, enclosed and timeless world as their British counterparts. They all developed a way of life that may be defined as hierarchial, masculine and competitive. The boys of St Sylvester's used the same language as the pupils of St Frank's and St Jim's. Examples of this apparently international form of communication include such public school gems as 'old bean'; 'By George'; 'What the Dickens!'; 'you old rascal'; 'By Jingo'; 'great pip'; and that great perennial – 'We'll teach the bounders!'

In September 1940 *Our Boys* published the first Murphy school story. This was the beginning of a tradition that was to last for many decades. The series, by William Hickey, was still to be found in the magazine in the 1970s. Murphy was the main character in each of these stories, along with his friends, Bailey, O'Dwyer, Jackson, Mahony, Curtis and 'the Rajah', the type of character without whom no school story



Figure 1



An interesting amalgam of British public school and the GAA, 'Revenge' (June 1930) was a tale of an ongoing feud between the Fatty Fagan's form – the Fourth – and their arch rivals of the Fifth form. In this picture (Figure 1) from that serial we see the confrontation between the two groups, on the issue of – well, what else but that perennial source of conflict – tuck!

would be complete, a stock figure of colonial exoticism. They constituted a group known as the 'Ayes', engaged in a never-ending struggle with Faye and his cohorts, of the 'Bees'. Though set in a school called St Ignatius, each story bore the name of the eponymous Murphy in its title. Examples include: 'Murphy's Masterpiece' (February 1941), in which our hero takes up the art of novel writing and submits a love story in a writing competition held by a local newspaper; 'Murphy the Sweep', in which he disguises himself as a chimney sweep in order to gain entry to the study of the Bees and steal their tuck (this was in revenge for the fact that their rivals had stolen a march on Murphy and his chums in the Christmas issue of the magazine, 'Murphy and the Christmas Party'). Other titles of this period included 'Murphy and the Crab' (September 1940), 'The Bike that Murphy Built' (October 1940) and 'Murphy and the Fireworks' (November 1940).

In common with its British counterparts, there was a marked change of emphasis in this serial as opposed to earlier examples of the genre in the 1920s and early 1930s. The illustrations, for example, indicate a broadening of the appeal, as can be seen by comparing 'Murphy' and the St Sylvester's stories. There is not the same

stress on distinctive dress, nor is there the same wide employment of the clichéd language that may be considered as stereotypical of the public school story.

Tosh's account (1991) of the social phenomenon of the mid-Victorian period onwards, 'the flight from domesticity', describes the context of the understanding of the ideal of Edwardian manliness, with particular reference to the empire and the entire structure of the adventure story for boys. It may be argued that the fantasy of attending a public or, as they were termed in Ireland, a boarding school, is another aspect of this development, this sub-genre performing some of the function of the adventure story or the mystery in the serial magazine for boys. In broad terms attending public school involved the opportunity of sharing many of the conventions of the frontier, detective or thriller genres. The school story may be seen as yet another setting where heroic masculinity might assert itself. Apart from such obvious features as, for example, autonomy from home – the dream of every pre-teen attempting to assert his individuality and define his own identity – and the opportunities for adventure in the realm of sport – a major aspect of the literature – there were certain narrative conventions which rarely changed and which addressed boyhood wish-fulfillment on a deep and even, it may be argued, subliminal level.

The boys who attended boarding schools had opportunities to 'have adventures' that were not available in the ordinary course of events. They were removed from the security of home and the familiar certainties of domestic routine. There was no shoulder to cry on in the corridor of the public school, no sympathetic maternal support to fall back on. Schoolboys had to assert themselves in several parallel masculine systems: with their peers, both friends and enemies, and with their teachers. There was a constant air of competition, both sporting and academic. If a boy could survive in such a male-dominated milieu – he was, almost by definition, a hero.

### The Western

The story of the Western is the story of America. Although formed by folk tales, national dreams, popular songs, yellow press reportage, dime fiction and outright lies, the Western is rooted in the historical realities of what took place during the gradual advance westward, in the nineteenth century, of the United States of America. While couched in terms of the coming of civilization, the rise of law and order or the establishment of community values, the Western is essentially about conquest. Cavalries conquer the Indians, pioneers conquer the wilderness, lawmen conquer outlaws and individuals conquer their circumstances. But with each conquest, another stretch of territory, whether geographical or philosophical, comes under the hegemony of the United States of America and the evils of the past fade away into prehistory.

It is commonplace to suggest that the Western serves the same function for Americans that such national bodies of myth as the *Odyssey*, the epic of Gilgamesh, the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Morte d'Arthur* or the plays of Shakespeare do for their respective cultures. Indeed, it would be and has been easy to take any of these and retell them in terms of cowboys, cattle barons and range wars. The crucial difference is that, with the arguable exception of Shakespeare's history plays, these concentrate, as the Western does not, in mythologising events of the remote, legendary past. The Western deals with a time that, when the genre was thriving, was within living memory. Indeed, even before the cinema came along, the dime novelists and tall-tale-spinners were creating the Western form while the West was still being won. Many of the best-known West-

ern characters – General Custer, Buffalo Bill, Wyatt Earp, Jesse James – are as famous as they are because they abetted their own myths, some even living long enough to cash in on the fame won by their exploits. Indeed, the ground rules of the genre had been established by James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking* cycle long before the historical period during which almost all Westerns are set (Newman, 1990: xv).

The disappearing frontier is the most powerful and persistent myth in American history. It is not a sectional myth but a national one. America does not have 'Easterns' or 'Southern', which *would* be sectional. They have Westerns, since America was, at the outset, *all* frontier. America (and, by proxy, the readers of Western stories in such outlets of popular culture as dime novels and serial papers, both American and European) experienced over and over again the excitement of a 'birth movement' when the new world was broken into, tamed, absorbed. James Fenimore Cooper created the archetypal figure for this movement when he sent his Hawkeye, in chronologically ordered novels, from the forests of New York to the Great Lakes and then to the western prairies where he died. After Hawkeye, other figures stood for the whole frontier experience: Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, Davy Crockett, Buffalo Bill. These men began in reality, but ended in myth (Willis, 1997: 14).

What is the essential appeal of this myth in the context of the Western serials that appeared in *Our Boys*? According to Cawelti (1977) the heart of the Western myth is an essential energy, yet though the intrinsic dramatic vigour and unity of the Western formula plays the major role in its success, this is not the whole story of the Western's popularity, for we must still ask why a particular artistic form or structure of conventions possesses dramatic power for the audiences who enjoy it, and what sort of dramatic power this is. There seem to be two levels on which this question can be answered. First, we can refer a particular form to some universal conception of types or genres, based presumably on innate qualities or characteristics of the human psyche. According to this approach, followed by various literary theorists from Aristotle to Northrop Frye, a particular work or group of works becomes successful insofar as it effectively carries out an archetypal structure, which is in turn based on either innate human capacities and needs or on fundamental and universal patterns of experience. Using such a universal system as that suggested in Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1971), it is fairly simple to outline the relationship between the Western and archetypal forms. The Western is a fine example of what Frye calls the *mythos* of romance, a narrative and dramatic structure which he characterises as one of the four central myths or story forms in literature, the other three being comedy, tragedy, and irony. As Frye defines it, 'the essential element of plot in romance is adventure', and the major adventure which gives form to the romance is the quest. Thus the complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero (Frye, 1971: 186). These characteristics certainly fit the Western. The central action of chase and pursuit dramatises the quest, the climactic shoot-down embodies the crucial battle, and the movement of the hero from alienation to commitment is an example of the 'recognition of the hero, who has clearly proved himself to be a hero even if he does not survive the conflict'.

Other characteristics of romance, as Frye defines it, are also clearly present in the Western: the struggle between hero and villain; the tendency to present both figures

as coming not from the town but from the surrounding landscape; the way in which the hero's action is commonly associated with the establishment of law and order. These qualities also relate the Western to romances of many different cultures and periods. The central form of romance is dialectical: everything is focused on a conflict between the hero and his enemy, and all the reader's values are bound up with the hero. Hence the hero of romance is analogous to the mythical messiah or deliverer who comes from an upper world, and his enemy is analogous to the demonic powers of the lower world. The conflict, however, takes place in, or at any rate primarily concerns, our world in the middle (Cawelti, 1977: 92).

An interesting example of the Western genre in *Our Boys* is a series involving the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, specifically Sergeant Moloney and His Mounties. There are several aspects to this series that are worthy of note. Firstly, the standard of writing, by Margaret Griffiths, was of an extremely sophisticated level for this genre. The names of the Mounties are exclusively Irish. To a boy who may have been unaware of the exact origins of this quasi-military force and the fact that Canada was in fact part of the British international family in the year the series first appeared, 1930, it could have been interpreted that Ireland, or some type of Irish force, enjoyed a measure of control over the Great North West. It is Griffith's vivid descriptions of the mountains, lakes and rapids of this territory which give the stories much of their flavour. She is no less an interesting narrator: her accounts of the variety of characters are rich and full of human detail – murderous outlaws, honest miners, simple woodsmen, savage Eskimos, sly French-Canadian trappers, noble (and occasionally evil) Indians, and of course, the heroic figures of the Irish Mounties: the eponymous Sergeant Jack Moloney, Corporal Laurence Burke, Trooper Joe Mahony, Captain Paul Kelly, and their leader, the man who presided over law and order in the vast spaces of this wilderness, 'Iron Hand' O'Brien, District Commandant for the Yukon Territory.

Though not 'American' in the conventional sense of the word, it is in fact the ultimate *North American* narrative, fulfilling such criteria as being set in the wilderness and concerning the struggle between good and evil in a lawless, frontier milieu. Furthermore, it is interesting in the context of issues of masculinity to explore the manner in which the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are portrayed as figures of order: uniformed, structured, organisational men against the background of a wild, harsh and unforgiving landscape. There is also a certain irony in the fact that this is essentially an imperial genre; British juvenile literature choosing to take this theme as a form of 'conditioning', and often in fact programmatic, depicting the frontier as a place where men could prove themselves and learn the resilience they would need to rule an empire, with the figure of the Mountie being one of the quintessential emblems of male, imperial order (Crang, 1998: 75). Yet in the case of Griffith's stories they are, even the senior officers, exclusively Irish! This may perhaps be interpreted as a popular literary version of Irish masculine wish-fulfillment.

### The Detective Story

The spaces of detective fiction are always integral to the texts of detective fiction. The spaces of the genre are always 'productive' of the crime they contain and structure, forcing the detective to engage with the setting she/he inhabits in order to understand and therefore solve the crime. To the detective 'there is no stone in the street, no brick

in the wall that is not actually a deliberate symbol — a message from some man, as much as if it were a telegram or postcard' (Crang 1998: 51). The detective is thus set up as an interpreter of urban life, rendering the spaces of the city legible. For instance, Sherlock Holmes ventures out to find knowledge about mysteries, often by going off into the darkest recesses of the city, into the opium dens and backways. In the foggy London of Holmes, the central landscape features are the opaque mysterious goings-on in such hidden realms. Hidden because although Holmes goes into them, as a master of disguise — the reader rarely follows. The city is a riot of meanings, of significance, where the minutiae speak volumes to Holmes — but a city that cannot be read by us unaided. Holmes, however, can go anywhere, moving freely and bringing order out of this chaos. The lights of Baker Street are beacons of hope and reason. Holmes is the embodiment of 'epistemological optimism', the hope and possibility that the city can be interpreted and understood through the power of reason.

Holmes is the original 'Great Detective'. He helps us to make sense of the city, to understand and to rationalise in the midst of confusion. This genre has a strong appeal to the youthful reader, especially boys. The detective is essentially a loner. As the adolescent boy experiences the isolation of development, caught somewhere between one state and another, he identifies with the ability of the detective to triumph over adversity, to enter the forbidden zone, the underworld, to return with his heroic status enhanced. This aspect of the genre had a particular relevance as the time of school attendance was gradually increased from the 1920s onwards and boys who in a previous generation would have found themselves in the local mill or mine (if English) or the local grocery shop or on an emigrant ship (if Irish) now found themselves in an educationally-motivated extended childhood. Many of these boys were attracted to the concept of the detective as 'intelligent hero'. Detective stories literally answered questions; fed the need to seek the extraordinary in the everyday.

These detective stories are a plea for science not only in the spheres conventionally associated with detection (footprints, traces of hair or cloth, cigarette ends), where they have been deservedly influential on forensic practice, but in all areas. They reflect the widespread optimism characteristic of their period concerning the comprehensive power of positivist science. Holmes's ability to deduce Watson's train of thought, for instance, is repeatedly displayed, and it owes nothing to the supernatural. Once explained, the reasoning process always appears 'absurdly simple', open to the commonest of common sense (Belsey, 1997: 236). This is an appealing trait to the adolescent boy — he is himself at the 'game' stage, a level of development where rules apply, and where hierarchies, whether at home or school, dominate. Within his peer group each individual seeks both to conform and to assert individuality within the accepted range. It is here that the cleverness of the detective, allied to his heroic status, can indicate a way of not only surviving in the various settings through which the adolescent must negotiate — as the detective negotiates the gray area where everyday life and the forbidden zone, the underworld, interact — but can transcend mere survival, and in the form of identification, in the process of solving the 'puzzle', elevate the act of interrelationship to a superior plane where the boy is in control, where each week, albeit in the realm of fantasy, he 'wins'.

The producers of the boys' papers were not slow to recognize the appeal of the detective. By the 1920s Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee were two of the most popular of what has been termed 'the office boy Sherlock Holmes' (Turner, 1948: 159). Other



famous sleuths in the British papers included Dixon Brett, Nick Carter and Falcon Swift. As cinema began to expand as a medium of entertainment during this period so too did the figure of the detective become a standard character in the Saturday afternoon pantheon of childhood heroes. The detective was an equally ubiquitous figure in *Our Boys* from the period of the magazine's inception, and by the 1920s and 1930s every issue contained at least one story that would qualify under this heading.

Like the school stories, they can be divided into two main types – involving either closed or open settings. In detective literature the 'closed setting' (variants of which included airplanes, trains, ships and of course, the narrow confines of the rectory or big house) had the advantage of limiting the body of suspects and (usually) simplifying social differences. The ultimate purpose of this form of setting was to emphasise the thrust of the plot – from order through disorder to a final state of order. The smaller the world under examination, it was felt by some critics, notably W.H. Auden, the more effective will be the state of restored order (Hayne, 2000: 76). A good example of this genre which featured in *Our Boys* is a story entitled 'The Train Tragedy', which ran March to May 1931.

The long-running O'Malley series typifies the open setting. In this series, written by C. Kirwan and first appearing in *Our Boys* in 1927, we find a hero to whom there are no barriers. Far removed from the narrow confines of drawing room, cloister or family gathering, O'Malley wanders the world in his motor yacht, *Topsail*. He is accompanied on his international adventures by his trusty assistant, Cullen. We are never told their first names, nor are we informed of the forename of the person to whom each episode is recounted.

O'Malley travels extensively, the range of his adventures stretching across the globe, encompassing such diverse locations as the South Sea Islands, the coast of Japan and the shores of North Africa. Having no obvious source of income and yet enjoying literally boundless freedom, he may be placed within the category of 'gentleman adventurer' or 'amateur'. In the realm of popular fiction during the inter-war years he was in good company. Notable examples of this genre included Major Roger Bennion, property developer and intelligence officer, created by Herbert Adams and appearing in such stories as *Exit the Skeleton* (1928); The Honourable Everard Blatchington, gentleman of leisure, who was the hero in such works as *The Blatchington Tangle* (1926) and *Death in the Quarry* (1934), created by G.D.H. and M. Cole; Ludovic Travers, writer and gentleman of leisure, created by Christopher Bush and appearing in *The Plumley Inheritance* (1926); and Dorthy L. Sayer's Lord Peter Wimsey, connoisseur and gentleman of leisure, who first entertained readers of popular detective fiction in *Whose Body* (1923) and made his final appearance in *Busman's Honeymoon* (1937) (see Ousby, 1997: 88–9).

Both Frank O'Meara, the detective of 'The Train Tragedy', and O'Malley come, literally, from the same school. What each detective has in common, the detective chosen to represent the closed setting of the genre and the older, more sophisticated O'Malley, of the open setting, is that their stories are redolent of the experience of school days. This is the Irish version of the experience – boarding school as opposed to public school – but the conclusion can nevertheless be drawn that there is very little difference essentially in the philosophy of either national educational institution: the ultimate intention of each system was to produce an ethos to support the middle class affiliations of the target audience. In this *Our Boys* was no different to *Boy's Own*. The

following extract from 'Death Knives of Sicily', though describing the adventures of two young Irish detectives in the Sicilian hills, could, with its gung-ho philosophy, colonial spirit and classical references, be taken from any British boys paper of the period:

Sicily is an island well endowed with natural beauty and the primitiveness of the Sicilians themselves invests them with a charm that is very pleasing to a blasé city man. We enjoyed our trek from Catania immensely. The weather was magnificent, and we strode up hill and down dale with hearts as light as air. The knapsacks on our shoulders held sleeping-sacks and four days' provisions. We did not like to over-burden ourselves, as we hoped for some hospitality from the shepherds on the mountain slopes.

As we advanced further, our task grew more difficult. Our track became steeper and steeper, and soon we found that we could not retrace our steps. We were lost in the hills. We had seen very few people on our tramp. An occasional shepherd or goat-herd in picturesque attire who gave a surly answer to our hearty 'good day,' and then resumed piping on their flutes. They put us in mind of our schooldays when we had been reading Virgil and Theocritus.

We imagined we were back in the days when Daphnis and Menalcas were piping to the nymphs in the valleys. Most certainly we never connected the peaceful pastoral scenes with the orgy of blood-spilling we were soon to witness.

Night fell rather quickly, and Cullen said we should turn in. We had done something between thirty and forty miles that day, and were a bit tired. So after a hastily-prepared supper, we shooed the lizards away and tucked ourselves into our bags under the shelter of two rocks on the mountain-side. We were soon fast asleep. (*Our Boys*, June 1927, vol. XIII, p. 661)

Hearing a shot which came 'from an old fashioned gun' O'Malley is suddenly awakened during the night. This initial shot is followed by several more. Waking Cullen, O'Malley is at the point of dismissing this nocturnal disturbance as nothing more than a shepherd firing at wolves when the night air is rent by a piteous screaming in the distance, 'women and children crying out in the hills in the grey dawn'.

When O'Malley and his assistant go to find out the source of the frightening sounds they discover, on the floor of a 'mean kitchen', the body of 'a fine young shepherd and his wife riddled with bullets'. Shocked by the sight, O'Malley resolves to investigate. Making local inquiries he is informed that the unfortunate young couple were killed as a result of a long running vendetta. There then follows a tale that could be regarded as typical of the 'outdoor' detective abroad. He discovers the reason for the ferocity of this local feud and resolves the issue. This is an example of what might be termed the *deus ex machina* element of the detective's role in this form of narrative structure: coming out of the landscape, in this case through the mobility of his yacht, *Topsail*, the western detective intervenes in the affairs of this foreign culture, where he briefly finds himself. The intervention is invariably successful, order is restored and he either returns to his own culture or moves on in pursuit of further adventure and in search of more mysteries to solve.

Other examples of the O'Malley series include 'The Rays That Killed – A Story of Political Adventure in Portugal' and 'Rogues of the Yellow Sea – A Stirring



Figure 2



Two stories that illustrate the international range and 'open' nature of the O'Malley series, 'The Rays that Killed' was published in May and 'Death Knives of Sicily' in June 1927. In 'Rogues of the Yellow Sea', from April 1927, O'Malley comes to the aid of a fishing village called Hong-Ju on the coast of the Yellow Sea. Pirates from China and Japan who come to steal the pearl oysters that flourished in the region are constantly robbing the poor fishermen of this village. O'Malley and Cullen assist local patrolmen to catch these poachers in the act of stealing, something they had previously been unable to accomplish, through using the speed of the Topsail and their own sailing expertise.

Figure 3



Episode among the Pearl Fishers', both published in 1927. As in all the O'Malley adventures, our hero uses his superior intelligence to resolve wrongs and restore order. What is unique about this series is the fact that here we have an Irish detective competing on equal terms with the more conventional example of his English counterpart.

### Science Fiction

The first episode of the long series *Through the Realms of Space* appeared in *Our Boys* in March 1929. It follows the adventures of Professor O'Callaghan and his companions as they voyage through the universe. Having stumbled upon a mighty energy source, one sufficiently powerful to directly counteract the pull of gravity. O'Callaghan has built *The Conqueror*, an all-steel vessel. Now, with his trusty companions – Denver, the Massey brothers, Dick and Frank, and Moore and Donovan – he is ready to undertake his fantastic voyage.

'The extraordinary voyage' is of course one of the oldest forms of narrative in the literature of popular fantasy. The medieval tales about the voyages of Sir John Mandeville, much reprinted in the post-Caxton era, were, during the age of Columbus and the discoveries, to develop into the full blown genre of the imaginary voyage. Much early utopian writing, such as Thomas More's *Utopia*, Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, or Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun*, fits very neatly into this genre, and utopian comment was indeed a frequent element of these imaginary voyages. There were at least 215 stories of imaginary voyages published in Western Europe and America in the eighteenth century, of which Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) is undoubtedly the best known. Most of the stories of imaginary voyages written in the nineteenth century continued to be about the discovery of marvelous or mysterious people and places in the remoter parts of the world. There are nineteenth-century tales of imaginary voyages which discover lost races in every conceivable corner of the Earth's surface, as well as a large sub-genre which finds them inside a hollow Earth, following the once fashionable theories of John Cleves Symmes (d.1829). Voyagers inside the hollow Earth found whole solar systems, the Garden of Eden, dog-headed humans, utopian societies, and prehistoric monsters. In one of the most interesting and impressive nineteenth-century examples, Mary E. Bradley Lane's feminist *Mizora* (1890), the heroine, Vera Zarovitch, found an all-female society, lacking not only men, but also crime, religion, class, disease, domestic animals, and brunettes (brunettes were considered troublesome).

In 1895 alone seventeen examples of the extraordinary voyage were published. Charles Dixon's *Fifteen Hundred Miles An Hour* (Britain) was a boys' story about a German inventor who took some young friends with him to Mars, to meet Martians. Gustavus Pope's sequel to his *Journey to Mars* (1894), *Journey to Venus* (US), was an early example of what became a cliché: the idea that Venus was the jungle home of prehistoric monsters and cavemen. Not all the travel was by spaceship: Edgar Fawcett's *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle* (US) had a drug which allowed a scientist to roam at will in his astral body, to the Moon and the stars; while Tremlett Carter's *The People of the Moon* (Britain) used the occult device of astral projection in order to explore the Moon (James, 1994: 14).

Jules Verne had an enormous influence on this genre. His major science-fictional 'Voyages extraordinaires' were translated into English soon after publication: *A Jour-*

ney to the Centre of the Earth (1863) appeared in London in 1872 and New York in 1874; *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865) was published in Newark, New Jersey, in 1869 and with its sequel *Round the Moon* (1869) in London in 1873 and New York in 1874; *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1870) was published in London and New York in 1873; and so on. He was also very widely imitated, in Europe and in the United States, and was an influence on the earliest American magazines some fifty years after his greatest works appeared (nearly all in the 1860s and 1870s). From its first issue in 1926 and for years thereafter, the magazine *Amazing Stories* had a drawing of Jules Verne's tomb at Amiens on its title-page, the immortal Verne in the act of raising the lid of his tombstone to peer into his own future.

*Amazing Stories* was a product of a period that has become known as the Golden Age of science fiction. Much of this material was published in pulp magazines – the word referring to the cheap quality of the paper used in the magazines, although to many it also connotes the sensational nature of the material therein: Western stories, fantasy and the detective tale, along with science fiction, predominating in an American urban market hungry for escapism. The pulp magazine, with its brightly coloured cover, low price and sensationalist stories supplied this need. Other American science fiction magazines included *Science Wonder Stories*, *Astounding Stories*, *Marvel Science Stories*, *Planet Stories* and *Galaxy Science Fiction* (Ackerman, 1998: 107). In Britain science fiction material was published in *Pearson's Weekly* and *Pearson's Magazine*. The readership of these stories in the 1920s and 30s was generally young and primarily male, the language and narrative structure simplified to a fairly undemanding pulp vocabulary, such taboo subjects as sex being generally avoided (Nicholls, 1979: 285).

In introducing its own science fiction serial in 1929 *Our Boys* was replicating a trend popular in the British boys' papers of the day. *Champion*, *Boys' Magazine* and *Boys' Friend* all featured tales of 'planets and lost cities', while the newcomers on the market, from the Dundee School – *Hotspur*, *Rover*, *Adventure*, *Wizard* and *Skipper* – were not slow to recognize the appeal of the fantastic to that generation of British boys whose only form of relief from the bleakness of poverty and slump was a weekly visit to their local picture palace and a trip to the newsagents to 'follow-up' the adventures of their favourite leisure paper hero (Turner, 1948: 148).

This is a genre that would not generally be associated with a magazine that has a conservative, traditional resonance in the public mind. The appearance of the O'Callaghan series indicates an editorial policy that was alive to the narrative appeal of such a story to the youthful reader, a trend that was noticeable in other juvenile markets such as Britain and America. This places *Our Boys* in an international context, side by side with not only the British boys' papers but the American and British pulp magazines, broadening the range of narrative material and considerably increasing the appeal of the Irish magazine.

## Conclusion

The very fact that *Through the Realms of Space* and the various other serials of conventional boys popular literature, detective, western and boy scout appear in *Our Boys* at this time, side by side with Irish Catholic devotional material and nationalist fiction, is an indication of just how eclectic the Irish paper was and a reflection of the insight which Brother Canice Craven possessed. Notwithstanding his involvement in a move-

Figure 4



*Through the Realms of Space* is a fine serial of its genre, well written, by Frank Diamond, which appeared in *Our Boys* on 19 June 1929. It has a clever balance between the need to inform, albeit along the lines of scientific speculation, and the requirement to entertain. In this latter aspect Diamond obviously knows his market: there is a good deal of tension, and enough of that amorphous quality which makes boys' fiction work, the identification with the characters and their adventures, to keep the readers coming back for more.

ment which might define arch conservatism today (the Campaign Against Filthy Literature) and the revisionist thinking that seeks to paint the Christian Brothers in a certain light, one driven more by the perceived proselytising nature of the *Our Boys* institution than the actual fact that there was much quality entertainment here also, it must be stated that these were excellent stories, as good as their overseas competitors, and at a point where Irish boys had precious little to emulate in their own culture, cinema screens being dominated by Hollywood and the British film studios; the leisure reading market controlled by Fleet Street and Dundee. It should be remembered that the standard depiction of Irish masculinity in these media outlets ranged from the stupidity of the stage Irishman to the maudlin caricature of the whiskey priest.

*Our Boys* at least made an effort to give Irish boys positive models of masculinity, ranging from the world weary sophistication of the international detective, O'Malley, to the autonomous survival skills of Murphy and his chums, to the intelligence and courage of Professor O'Callaghan, to the frontier ruggedness and heroism of the Irish Mounties. This process of identification with heroic archetypes even vaguely from native culture, though the narrative settings were quintessentially colonial, served a vital function at a time when national self-esteem was at low ebb. It should perhaps be remembered in the modern era that being Irish did not always

possess the international cachet that it does today.

The boys who read their fortnightly copy of *Our Boys* in the early decades of the Free State era, perhaps by candlelight in cottages on the west coast no different from those described by Victor O'D. Power (in his *Tales Told in the Turflight* series) or by hissing gaslight in the small towns of the midlands or perhaps by the more modern electric light in their suburban Dublin beds, all at least were given access to a world of fantasy that was unique to themselves, and experienced at least briefly the bond of companionship which was a cause for envy when they read *Gem*, *Magnet* or *Hotspur*. There were Irish heroes too, not necessarily belonging to the past, consigned to the pages of history, but modern boys and men similar to themselves with names like Murphy and O'Meara, and it was possible to identify with them, to feel that you too could be a hero.

### AUTHOR

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# **'BLESSED WITH THE FACULTY OF MIRTHFULNESS': The 'New Journalism' and Irish Local Newspapers in 1900**

Mark Wehrly

THROUGHOUT THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, several developments contrived – mostly indirectly – to make newspaper publishing in Britain an attractive business prospect. These included rising literacy levels, the abolition of taxes on newspapers in 1855 and innovations in the way newspapers were produced and distributed. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards this had the effect, in both Britain and Ireland, of increasing in multiples the number of different newspapers that were published (Cullen, 1989: 4–5). Likewise, in Dublin as in London, lively debates took place on the desirability of these developments, and the question of the social function of journalism was widely discussed (Anon, 1858; Anon, 1863; Elrington, 1867; Autolycus, 1879). One of the most discernible changes in British journalism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century – and one also that intensified this debate – was a movement to a 'new journalism'. This constituted a shift from scholarship and austerity to lively populism and sensationalism; both through the employment of typographical devices made possible by new technologies and through relatively recent innovations such as the inverted pyramid, human-interest news values, and interviews. Thus, rather than working to educate, as the older journalists saw their function, 'new journalism' shocked and entertained while it informed (Lee, 1976: 101). But while the 'new journalism' became a central focus of the modernisation the profession underwent at the turn of the twentieth century in Britain, it has rarely been considered in studies of Irish journalism – despite the obvious parallels.

It is all too tempting to associate journalistic developments in Britain with the Irish press. Newspaper publishing in Ireland had expanded to such an extent that by the final decade of the nineteenth century, newspaper reading was entering what Marie-Louise Legg calls a 'golden age' (1999: 174). Particularly in the regions, newspapers multiplied over a short period of time; in Sligo, for instance, between 1885 and 1927, no fewer than thirteen local newspapers were in operation at one time or another (McTernan, 2000: 519–26). Given this heightened production activity, it might be reasonable to suggest this occurred in tandem with developments in Britain. Ireland did, after all, reap the same benefits (or drawbacks, depending on one's position) from the 1855 abolition of newspaper taxes, and also saw rising literacy levels and technological innovations (Cullen, 1989: 11). But there are good reasons why Irish media historians recoil from discussions of 'new journalism'. Firstly, implicit in the descriptions of 'new journalism' in British newspaper historiography is a grand-narrative approach to writing which was, according to Legg, difficult if not impossible to apply in Ireland (1999:

6–7). The distinctly local character of Irish politics – and the close relationship between Irish politics and journalism during the period – made it virtually impossible to ignore the local press, which led to an obvious practical concern:

One of the problems about writing about newspapers is the sheer size of the text itself. Severe self-discipline is required not to get involved in reading all the advertisements, invaluable though they may be as a source for the history of consumerism, or in pursuing minor heroes, lost dogs, train accidents or petty crimes. In one sense, in order to write the history of the press, one should refrain from reading newspapers at all. [... My] purpose was not to work on the events reported in the newspapers (even if they did have an effect on national politics), but rather to disinter those who ran and wrote the newspapers themselves and the effect of legislation, government policy and events on them. If an event did affect a newspaper – as the Galway County by-election petition hearing of 1872 revealed the role of the Tuam Herald in organising and subverting the by-election campaign for their candidate – then that was of importance to me. (Legg, 2007)

This is not to say Marie-Louise Legg simply ignored ‘new journalism’ in Ireland on the grounds of practicality.<sup>1</sup> Rather, the heightened political realities which led to the local press becoming such a force in the late-nineteenth century also impinged on the proliferation of ‘new journalism’ there. Thus, the modernisation of the Irish press was not allowed to occur at the same rate as that of its British counterpart due to the tensions of the national question that would continually exist, in different guises, from the 1880s until the early 1920s (Foley, 2004: 374). Further complicating matters, as this article will illustrate, is the difficulty in ascertaining what exactly was new about the ‘new journalism’.

### Sligo and Fleet Street

In the case of Sligo, it is particularly easy to ignore these caveats and make easy associations with Fleet Street. In 1885, for instance, just as P.A. McHugh embarked on what would become an influential career as editor of the *Sligo Champion*, W.T. Stead’s career-defining ‘Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’ – a shocking expose of a child prostitution ring operating in central London – was published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (20 July 1885). Shortly thereafter, T.P. O’Connor was appointed editor of Henry Labouchere’s *Star* newspaper – his reputation for lively, populist prose making him more desirable than no less a figure than Viscount John Morley (Sheehy, 2004: 78). In 1888, O’Connor, too, would cement his journalistic reputation, driving the *Star*’s sensationalist coverage during the series of murders in the Whitechapel district (10 November 1888). Subsequent to their journalistic triumphs, both Stead and O’Connor wrote articles on what they saw to be the function of journalism. Stead’s ‘Government by Journalism’ and ‘The Future of Journalism’, both published in the *Contemporary Review* (1886; 1886a), and O’Connor’s ‘The New Journalism’, published in the *New Review* (1889), excitedly announce the possibilities journalism

<sup>1</sup> On the contrary – Legg references Stead’s ‘Government by Journalism’ as a credo by which the Land League operated, whether intentionally or not, in many localities (1999: 93).



held to further influence society. Together, these writings formed much of the ideological basis for 'new journalism', subsequently adapted by others for various purposes in such a way as to make a definition problematic. Alan Lee came closest to success here, describing 'new journalism' as a set of journalistic and typographic devices aimed at making the newspaper more readable (1976: 103).

From his arrival as editor of the *Sligo Champion* in 1885, meanwhile, P.A. McHugh was well and truly a political animal. He quickly established himself as a leading figure in local affairs, and while he was initially unsuccessful in his attempts to gain the Irish Party nomination for any of the Sligo or Leitrim constituencies, the fall of Parnell paved the way for his election to parliament for the first time in 1893 (Ní Liatháin, 1998: 17). He became aware of the changes that were taking place in journalism – T.P. O'Connor also happened to be a prominent member of the Irish Party. It is not surprising as a result that McHugh spoke often, and with admiration, of the 'pioneering work' of O'Connor (*Sligo Champion*, 17 June 1893).

One of the core differences between the old journalism and the new, according to Lee, was the persistence of a lighter literary touch (1976: 112). Despite the easy associations above, there was little in the way of a 'lighter touch' in the *Sligo Champion* until the late-1890s. It was then that Arthur Malley – a Protestant, unionist veteran of the Sligo newspaper industry – was controversially welcomed into the fold at the *Sligo Champion*, where he set about making the newspaper a more diverse product, one which embraced the light and the literary in addition to fulfilling its political commitments as the then-official organ of the United Irish League in the northwest. Born in 1840 in Castlebar, Co Mayo, Malley had been well-known to the reading public of Sligo for some time before he joined the *Sligo Champion* in 1897 (McTernan, 2000: 378). From 1876 he was a journalist in the unionist *Sligo Independent*, where he gained a reputation for literary talent, originality and humour. Indeed, even his nationalist counterparts paid tribute to him when he left Sligo in 1887 in an attempt to further his career in London:

Mr Malley was for many years a familiar figure at the public boards of Sligo, with whose routine he was thoroughly acquainted ... As editor of the *Sligo Independent* he showed a keen appreciation of the tastes of the Orange Party in Sligo, for which he wrote. As an all-round man he stood deservedly in high profession, being regarded as one of the most accomplished journalists in the West of Ireland. It will simply be impossible for our contemporary to replace him. (*Sligo Champion*, 11 June 1887)

However, beneath this affable exterior, Malley was a deeply flawed individual. By 1890 his family had disowned him owing to his 'intemperate habits' and he foundered as a journalist in London. Upset by his failure, he made an abortive attempt on his own life in 1892, after which police contacted Bernard Collery, a friend of Malley's who was serving as nationalist MP for North Sligo (*Sligo Champion*, 2 January 1892). After a stint as a journalist at the *Newsletter* in Belfast, he returned to Sligo in 1897 where he joined the editorial staff at the *Sligo Champion*, the nationalist newspaper he had directed many an editorial against during his time with the *Sligo Independent*. Malley's tenure at the *Sligo Champion* lasted until his sudden death in 1904 (McTernan, 2000: 381).

Malley's most notable literary contribution to the *Sligo Champion* was a 'Comic History of Sligo'. It was hardly remarkable that the *Champion* engaged in the popularisation of the past in this way – local newspapers in Sligo and elsewhere displayed eagerness in this area. For these newspapers, there were a number of different uses for this – political, commercial and journalistic. The use of history to generate a local solidarity divorced from the political present was embraced particularly by the unionist press. For instance, the editor of the *Sligo Times*, Bob Smyllie,<sup>2</sup> ran a serial on the history of Sligo that was not infused with political rhetoric one way or another in its treatment of heritage and folklore (10 April 1910). Under William Peebles in the 1920s the *Sligo Independent* had another, equally apolitical, use for the past. In 1923, notice was given of a new column in which material would be taken out of old files of the *Independent* (*Sligo Independent*, 21 March 1923). The column was called 'Peeps into Sligo's Past', and relied on a nostalgia element that is synonymous even with local newspapers of the present. This seized upon a popular response to the 'new journalism', and the modern newspaper's symbolism of hectic modern life: the propensity to retreat back into the newspapers of the previous century. Writing in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1901, Louis Brindley highlighted this, writing of the reward and value of keeping old newspapers as reminders of simpler times. Brindley (1901) contended that while technologically, newspapers had improved a great deal as a form of enlightenment and literary satisfaction, they were a poor relation to their hundred-year-old predecessors. There was no more satisfying a way to spend a free afternoon, he continued, than reading through a pile of century-old newspapers. That the *Sligo Independent* was reproducing journalistic material from its past not only indicated that the newspaper itself was becoming part of the entertainment, but also that there was still at least a nostalgia for the pre-new journalistic past on the part of the editor. As for the readers, Peebles – like Smyllie – hoped to play on the local element of the history, and in his case it proved a success as the *Independent* continued to grow in circulation and readership throughout the 1920s (*Sligo Independent*, 21–28 March 1923). Of course, these examples of the popularisation of Sligo's past in the newspapers shunned the obvious political energy that could be harnessed, and constituted a potent rejection, rather than an affirmation, of the 'new journalism'.

At the same time, the nationalist *Connachtman* was continuing to 'plunder the past' (Legg, 1999: 93) in a much more political manner – through the glorification of fallen heroes of Irish nationalism. This was a specific example of something that had been generally ongoing for some time before that newspaper's editor, R.G. Bradshaw, had even arrived in Sligo. It helped teach readers of nationalist newspapers new ways to hate the government of Britain – inflaming 'the passions of the people by rhetorical descriptions of the wrongs of other days'. Although the Gaelic League

<sup>2</sup> Originally from Carntyne in Glasgow, Bob Smyllie was the father of future *Irish Times* editor, Robert Maire Smyllie. He edited the *Sligo Independent* during a successful period for that paper in the 1890s, when it supplanted the *Sligo Chronicle* as the foremost Conservative journal in Sligo. An inheritance from a wealthy uncle enabled him to start his own newspaper, the *Sligo Times*, in 1909. The newspaper only lasted five years, having been beset by difficulties. In 1912, the offices were destroyed by a fire, and even though Smyllie soldiered on for some time after, his venture was finally killed off when it came to light that his accountant had been embezzling advertising and printing revenue and had fled to America (Oram, 1983: 136). The issue of the *Sligo Times* was abruptly halted in February 1914, and the following month an item appeared in the *Sligo Champion* taken from the most recent edition of *Stubbs' Weekly Gazette* which confirmed that Smyllie had gone bankrupt (13 March 1914).

was involved in the exploration of the past, they viewed the local press with disdain for their use of this method. Douglas Hyde summarised this disdain thus: 'The man who reads Irish MSS and respects Ossianic poetry is a higher and more interesting type than the man whose mental training is confined to spelling through an article in United Ireland.' Martin O'Brennan's *Connaught Patriot* was in the 1870s and 1880s one of the foremost of those newspapers which set out to popularise Irish history and folklore for the nationalist project, but examples of this can be gleaned from almost any locality (Legg, 1999: 94–7).

Perhaps the two most effective exponents of the politicisation of popular history in the Sligo press were Charles Kingston, the editor of the *Sligo Star*; and R.G. Bradshaw during the *Connachtman*'s fractious run in the 1920s. The *Star* ran a serialised history series in 1900, entitled 'Sligo: Past and Present', in which the author's comments on 1798 were particularly vitriolic in their anti-British sentiment (12 April 1900). Bradshaw, writing in the *Connachtman* in 1921, also harked back to this, printing articles on particular instances from the 1798 Rebellion which highlighted the brutality of the crown forces (19 September 1921) to generate a renewal of the kind of hate-mongering that Legg described when dealing with O'Brennan in the 1870s.

However, as Legg also notes, between O'Brennan's historical writing in the 1870s and Bradshaw's in the 1920s, there was also inherent in Irish nationalism towards the end of the nineteenth century a conflict between this appeal to the past and the desire to modernise (1999: 98). This was the conflict Ian Sheehy (2004) illustrated when he dealt with the career of T.P. O'Connor at the *Star* newspaper in London in the 1880s. Before the turn of the century, nationalists proclaimed that 'there was no better type of Irishman' than O'Connor. However, by 1910, he would be the subject of novelist W.P. Ryan's ire in *The Plough and the Cross* for the extent to which constitutional nationalism had anglicised him and diluted his idea of what it meant to be Irish. This constituted a new standard being set by Irish nationalists (Sheehy, 2004: 76). It was one that Bradshaw would emulate in *An Connachtach* in the 1920s. Before that, however, there were a range of viewpoints on how Irish nationalist editors – and any other editors for that matter – would use the past in their editorial mission. O'Connor and other modernisers within the Irish Party, it is evident, were exasperated with the romanticism of the Gaelic League, and in some cases even with those editors, like Kingston at the *Sligo Star*, who wrote popular histories for nationalist edification.<sup>3</sup>

### The 'Comic History of Sligo'

Before the emergence of Bradshaw and the new nationalism in Sligo, P.A. McHugh was in many ways a popular disciple of O'Connor's, having been established as a vital cog of the Irish Party by the 1890s, and proudly sitting in Westminster, first for North Leitrim and later for North Sligo. The *Sligo Champion*, still under his editorial reign, produced in 1899 perhaps the most potent ridicule of the popularisation of history within the newspaper. It was called 'A Comic History of Sligo',<sup>4</sup> and writ-

<sup>3</sup> See Sheehy, 2004: 79 and Legg, 1999: 101. O'Connor's Irish Party colleagues who became tarred with the same brush, including McHugh, were seen not only to have turned their back on the scholarly approach to cultural nationalism espoused by the Gaelic League, but also the popular approach, which the League reviled. <sup>4</sup> Arthur Malley, 'A Comic History of Sligo', serialised in the *Sligo Champion*, first appearing on 27 Sep. 1899, and subsequently on 4 Oct. 1899, 11 Oct. 1899, 18 Oct. 1899, 1 Nov. 1899, 8 Nov. 1899, 15 Nov. 1899, 22 Nov. 1899, 29 Nov. 1899, 6 Dec. 1899, 13 Dec. 1899, 3 Mar. 1900, and 10 Mar. 1900.

ten by Malley under the pen-name 'Champion Plagiarist'. First and foremost, the 'Comic History' was a parody of the writing of history itself. In his introduction, Malley began with the statement that: 'Historians as a rule like to write introductions.' Continuing, he described the motivations of learned men such as:

Confucius, Julius Caesar, Goldsmith, Lord Macauley, Mr Froude, Mr Leckey, Col Wood-Martin [a local historian], and several other distinguished men whose names I forget [who] all took off their coats, turned up their sleeves, and took to writing history, just as if they had nothing else to do; and no matter how the thermometer stood they wrote introductions. (4 October 1899)

The parodying description of historical writing persisted with an analysis of the sources Malley would avail of. As well as taking information from other sources, he claimed, he would draw on his imagination. His defence for doing so entailed preposterous descriptions of the loss of ancient sources of information on the locality, such as the 'Morocco-bound volumes stitched in calf' that had been eaten by a wild goat in Glencar. He also wrote of the fact that the Assyrian MSS disclosed the way of spelling Sligo in ancient times as 'Sly-goe', in which case he called the natives 'Slygoers' (18 October 1899). The comical misinterpretations and preposterous claims of the historian were further lampooned in the following description of Sligo town:

The town of Sligo possesses great antiquity. Here Lot's wife was born; here Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, was educated; here Belchazzar was buried; here Romulus and Remus were married; here Jack the Giant Killer's father served his apprenticeship, and it was here that Antony first met Cleopatra. If the boulders of the streets of Sligo could speak, the stories they would tell of what they saw and heard would stagger humanity! Sligo started growing early in life, and although it was pruned down now and again by 'proud invaders', it always held its own, as a town anxious to extend itself and prove to the world it was no mushroom citie. When Galway, Cork, Derry, Belfast, Bellaghy and Ballydrihid were hamlets, trying to elbow themselves into notoriety, the town of Sligo was an enfranchised borough, having twenty-four members of parliament, a mayor, a recorder, a hangman, a chucker-out, and only one policeman. (22 November 1899)

Throughout it all, one of Malley's supposed sources was the 'Book of Ballymote', which he described as:

Apparently well rubbed ... with wet thumbs and dirty fingers. It was found by a friend of mine ... It has 52 pages and each page is nice and thick ... There are pictures of the kings who bore clubs and apparently dug with spades; and queens who wore their hearts upon their sleeves, or diamonds – red diamonds – upon their light shoulders. (22 November 1899)

He also claimed to have a copy of the Annals of the Four Masters, stating that 'this quartet consisted of a school master, workhouse master, a Master of Arts, and master mason – not a free and accepted, but a regular downright dry-wall mason, who worked according to the fair wages resolution of the House of Commons' (22 November 1899).

Malley's description of the Book of Ballymote not only lampooned the writing of local history, it also exhibited a satire that was geared more to the present locality. 'It was a good old book,' he wrote of it, adding that 'the only book which is nowadays better known in Ye Citie of Ballymote is the Clerk of Petty Sessions' swearing book, by which modern Dogberrys and good citizens are made to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth!' Indeed, the 'Comic History of Sligo' was as much a satire of present-day local affairs as it was of the writing of local history in newspapers. Malley frequently undertook comical descriptions and caricatures of County Court Judges, members of the Board of Guardians, and always referred to the now-defunct Grand Jury as 'the late Grand Jury (RIP)' (22 November 1899).

However, there was an even more frivolous sense of ridicule evoked by the 'Comic History of Sligo'. Indeed, perhaps the keenest social commentary to be gained from Malley's work was the fact that while the most ridiculed groups in the piece included politicians, there was also no escape for members of the legal profession or doctors. Malley wrote of the harmony enjoyed in ancient Sligo when there were no doctors or lawyers, saying that 'people lived a long time and died rich, and there were no equity suits over their assets when they were resting peaceably in their stone coffins' (29 November 1899). 'Cross mothers-in-law' were also highlighted in a chapter devoted entirely to their undesirability as a supposed 'class of people', illustrating his point with the fictitious events of 'The Days of Thiggum-Thu', a biography of 'a mighty monarch – a lineal descendant of the piper that played before Moses'. However, this supposed tirade also keenly demonstrated the relevance of the 'Comic History' as more than a mere send-up of historical writing itself; it was also a satire on contemporary life. Malley described how Thiggum-Thu had prospered until he married into a poor family, from which his mother-in-law, Mrs Celia Oatencake, 'ruled him and the country together – and both suffered'. He described her as having 'the courage of a man and the heart of a lion – and the tongue of a true woman' (6 December 1899).

With their new fortune, Thiggum-Thu's extended family lived in opulence, so much so that 'a want of money was soon the prevailing characteristic of this king'. A series of elections, the mother-in-law suggested, should be held to organise a parliament of the locals to arrange for supplies to be voted to the royal family. In these elections, women and children were given the vote. Mrs Oatencake prepared the entire list of voters herself, Malley claimed, by which time the total valid poll was set at 200,000 'and the poll could not close till every man, woman and child had voted!' The parliament that resulted from these elections met before Christmas, and just before an election of a speaker could take place, Mrs Oatencake herself took the chair – 'She swore very lustily that as she was a good talker she would make an excellent speaker' (6 December 1899). The parliament Malley described drew a parallel with the somewhat chequered history of Sligo borough, which had lost its right to elect its own MP when the Sligo and Cashel Disenfranchisement Act (1870) was passed by the House of Commons. This had come following a lengthy investigation into bribery and political corruption in the borough.<sup>5</sup>

Modern political institutions in Sligo borough were also lampooned by Malley, as was the case in the following passage:

<sup>5</sup> House of Commons (1868-1869), *Minutes of evidence at trial of Sligo Borough Election Petition*, 3/85, vol. 49., p. 935.

The debate that followed [the King of Sligo's speech] was brilliant, elastic and of vermilion colour. The member for Ballydrihid called the member for Ballysummaghan a liar, and the latter replied in classic language, 'you're another'. The member for Bundduff called the member for Ballyconnell 'a thief and a rascal', and the latter reminded the former that he never stole a laying goose. The king tried to frighten some of them by threatening to deprive them of their commission of the peace. The reporters of those days enjoyed life – theirs was no sinecure, especially as some of the members threatened to break every bone in their bodies when they would get them outside in a public house. The fun grew fast and furious, shillelaghs were whirled and hats were blocked and several members were suspended – from the rafters – by the public executioners. The majority decided (like a select vestry) that as it was not they chose the king, not a red cent would they vote him and they told him to go earn his bread in some honest way and not be loafing about with a crown on his head and a sceptre in his hand. The speaker (the mother-in-law) finding it impossible to keep order or get a hearing, although she went up to high 'g' in her shrieks, she at once called on the king to dissolve parliament, which he speedily did, bringing the master-at-arms and his attendants, with pitchforks, accompanied by bulldogs, mastiffs, red terriers etc. Soon there was a clearance, and 'who's for home – or the nearest pub' was shouted out by the doorkeepers ... So ended the first local parliament and the last one ever called in this county. In after ages, there was a base imitation by means of Irresponsible grand juries, life-elected harbour commissioners, corporations, town commissioners, boards of guardians, county and district councils: but alas! The old house in Cregg is no more – not one stone stands on another of that fine building – 'Sic Transit'. (6 December 1899)

However, like all satire, Malley's humour was lost on many of his readers, and although the 'Comic History' elicited a huge response, much of it was negative. He was forced, as a result, to preface the sixth chapter of the work with a defiant riposte to the many criticisms readers had with the liberties he had taken:

Some people, who have education and are the embodiment of culture and conscientiousness, seem to have no more sense of humour than a soothing-iron. I am not writing for people possessing parched and acrid sensibilities who will not enjoy my historic revelations. Some people cannot appreciate the fact that I am writing a comic history! My fatuous frivolity may be a perversion of my talent, and I may be a literary debauchee, wallowing in my own degradation; and some of my readers – one here and one there – may want to raise my wandering feet onto the solid rock of literal fact. Now I contend when I make my readers indulge in hearty, wholesome laughter, I am sure to shake off loads of gloom and trouble. I may be a falsifier, a distorter of facts, a literary montbank (so to speak), but I contend that ideas, incongruously associated becoming ludicrous to the intellect, are blessed with the faculty of mirthfulness. (8 November 1899)

However, even if some people just did not get it, the 'Comic History' was perhaps the only prominent, consistent, indication of a lighter side to that newspaper under



McHugh. Although his reign at the *Sligo Champion*, as we have seen, was not notable for its lighter side, his permission of such a parody echoed O'Connor's argument that although newspapers may be partisan, they did not always have to be serious. It was, however, hardly a coincidence that Malley's tenure at the paper at the turn of the century also saw a number of other lighter features such as the 'Original Poetry' column begin their short lifespan (27 December 1899).

### A Foot-Soldier for 'New Journalism'?

While Malley's work constituted a unique commentary on the idea of the journalist as popular historian, the question of whether it was indicative of the work of a 'new journalist' – lighter and more humorous than *Champion* readers would have been accustomed to – is more complex. Its status as a satirical, light-hearted piece may have imbued it with all the frivolity Matthew Arnold claimed was destructive about the 'new journalism', but it belonged to a tradition that significantly predated the work of Stead, O'Connor and those who followed. As early as 1844, Sligo readers were exposed to local satire by the *Cryptic*, although the brevity of its run – and the non-existence of a single issue in any archive – suggested that its infamy was such that few people in the town were sorry to see it out of business. This was a publication high on satire, in which a series of articles entitled 'Gallery of Distinguished Personages' held up to ridicule most of the town's leading politicians and public figures. The *Irish Booklover* described it as, 'a few pages in double column, poorly printed and its few photographs ... merely scurrilous gossip'.

One of the principal targets of the *Cryptic* was the editor of the *Sligo Champion*, E.H. Verdon – and in making an enemy of Verdon, the newspaper would trigger its decisive downfall. The proprietors were found guilty of promulgating 'a false, scandalous and malicious libel' in 1846 on Verdon, and sentenced to six months in prison, by which time the paper collapsed. However, a final testament to its impact appeared in the *Champion*, when Verdon celebrated 'crushing that immoral and obscene print which so long disgraced this Town. We pledge ourselves never to permit a similar publication to exist in our midst' (4 June 1846). Four decades later, Archdeacon Terence O'Rorke, the author of a two-column history of Sligo who was himself lampooned later by Malley in his 'Comic History', would give the same damning verdict on the *Cryptic*. He wrote that, 'this vile rag which traded in buffoonery and personalities was suppressed before the law ... but not before it had held up to ridicule and contempt many of the inhabitants of the town' (1889: 467).

However, its pretension at humour and apparent determination to offer a lighter alternative to the serious newspaper served to illustrate that this sentiment was not a novel one at the time when the term 'new journalism' was coming into vogue. Verdon found himself in an ironic reversal of roles four years later when he used the same type of ridicule to smite one of his commercial and political opponents – James Sedley of the *Sligo Chronicle*. This time it was Verdon's character assassination of Sedley that was the indiscretion, and again there was a certain amount of humour injected into the attack on the 'ultra-Orange rag and its editor'. The response of Sedley showed less than a keen sense of fun, however – he challenged Verdon to a duel. This confrontation actually came off at Maugheraboy just outside Sligo town in 1852, although neither Sedley nor Verdon were injured in the exchange of pistol fire (despite the rumour that Verdon used a poisoned bullet). Three years later,



Sedley even instituted libel proceedings against the Gillmor brothers – proprietors of the *Sligo Independent* – for the latter's publication of a comedic ballad entitled 'Anthony Craw' that he claimed was an attack on not only himself, but also his brother Charles and his late father (McTernan, 2000: 529). Subsequently the 'Comic History', and a large collection of other 'lighter touches' came to permeate the newspapers of Sligo – the most effective of which was the cartoonist Alfred McHugh's sketches in the *Sligo Star*.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, Malley's lightening up of the *Sligo Champion* through satire was by no means unique. Indeed, his literary exploits also jibbed well with the likes of Patrick Smyth, editor of the *Western People*, who published a number of novels, the most enduring of which was *The Wild Rose of Lough Gill*, published by Gill and Sons in 1883. There was also Joel Whittaker, Malley's predecessor as editor of the *Sligo Independent*, who published a play, *Name is Jones*, which was performed by the Sligo Dramatic Company in the Town Hall in 1879. Malley himself had previous experience in this area too, having written a number of tales and sketches in prose and verse throughout the 1870s in the *Sligo Independent*. Following a favourable response from readers, these were published as a collection entitled *The Garavogue Papers* (McTernan, 2000: 349–67).

It may thus be easier to associate Malley's work, and the work of those outlined above, with a lighter side of journalism that was not necessarily new. This was in contrast to other, lighter initiatives newspapers in Sligo undertook subsequently. There was a growing recognition that accompanying this new type of journalism was a new type of reader. Those who preferred the older style still read their newspapers methodically from front to back, not being distracted by some headline or story that would scream interest. Of course, those who favoured the 'new journalism' read messily, and were distracted by pictures and alluring headlines. If they found a newspaper folded on the tram on the way home from work, they would read the first item they saw on that fold, and would not pay attention to the logical sequence of the newspaper (Dawson, 1921: 368–80). In order to grab the attention of those who read sloppily, then, it was necessary to make them feel more involved in the process of reading. Some of the Sligo journals favoured a more interactive approach to ensure reader interest.

Perhaps the most innovative example of this was provided by Michael Dowd's *Sligo Star*, which printed a notice on 15 January 1902 of a competition open to all readers to determine who could point out the most typographical errors in the advertising

<sup>6</sup> Alfred McHugh – no relation to P.A. McHugh – was actively recruited by the *Sligo Star* from the *Roscommon Herald* in 1900. While at the *Herald*, McHugh had a fractious relationship with the paper's editor, Jasper Tully, who, like P.A. McHugh, was an Irish Party MP and believed the sole purpose of his newspaper was political propaganda. When Alfred McHugh refused an order that his cartoons promote Tully's political agenda, an argument ensued in which Alfred was reported to have broken a window in the *Herald* office and, also, in the words of his new employer, the *Sligo Star*, to have 'attempted with qualified success to inflict similar injuries on the cranium of the proprietor'. The result of ensuing legal proceedings was that Alfred McHugh was imprisoned for a month, after which time he joined the journalistic staff of the *Sligo Star*. Dowd wrote in his leader as he introduced McHugh as a member of the staff of the *Star*: 'It will be remembered that on the occasion of his committal to prison, Mr McHugh was escorted to the Railway Station by an enthusiastic crowd representative of all classes in Boyle – a fact which shows that Mr Tully is not, after all, the hero among those who know him best, which his paper would lead people to understand it was.' The cheerful way in which the *Star* reported this incident was no doubt due to the fact that the paper reputedly had a large circulation in north Roscommon, and particularly in Boyle, where it competed heavily with the *Roscommon Herald*.

columns. It was explicitly stated in the notice that the principal motivations were to boost sales and generate interest in the advertisements themselves. In 1918, too, the *Sligo Nationalist* included a gardening column (10 January), which also became a constant in the *Connachtman*<sup>7</sup> under the column heading of 'The Farm and Garden' (12 May 1920). By expanding the editorial content to cater for such extra-curricular interests, it gave those interested a compelling reason to buy the paper, or at least ensured their continued custom. The same attempt to compel people to keep buying was indicated earlier by the *Sligo Times*, as from the outset Bob Smyllie promoted the chess column as an aspect of the paper that would give satisfaction to many of his readers. Not only would it entail a weekly problem for the reader to solve, but it would also discuss attitudes to chess and anecdotes from famous grandmaster matches. Serialising these, it was hoped, would lead to continued, rather than sporadic, interest (*Sligo Times*, 19 February 1909). When William Peebles took over the *Sligo Independent* in 1920, meanwhile, he showed considerable enterprise in this respect also. In addition to the 'humour column' (first appearing 27 March 1920), there also appeared in 1923 a 'Ladies column', by 'Kathleen', which provided articles on making good coffee (24 February) and tips on fashion (17 March) and housekeeping (6 April).

Malley, with all his literary prowess, could not match the populism of these initiatives, which were at least more in keeping with the commercial, reader-oriented ethic of 'new journalism'. But even these examples have their problems when it comes to establishing their definitive associations with 'new journalism'. Dowd's competition, for instance, was designed to re-educate readers on the old-fashioned precision tendency, by encouraging a closer reading of the contents. Bradshaw's primary motivation, meanwhile, in his *Connachtman*, was unashamedly political, something that would have put him at odds with O'Connor, who – although a political activist – advocated that politics should not subordinate everything else in a newspaper. Smyllie's chess column was indicative, meanwhile, of the haphazard way games were covered by newspapers, and even in the 1920s, Sligo's surviving newspapers were only beginning to cover sporting events with any regularity. Likewise, there was nothing particularly original about Peebles's humorous titbits, or his column catering to specifically female activities. Such a realisation illustrates the care which 'new journalism' requires. While Malley's work was light, satirical and politically ambivalent – to the point where the author could be termed an equal-opportunities offender – it was still imbued with the scholarly prose that had distinguished a number of satirical pieces in the Sligo papers before. Thus, like these other brief examples, the 'Comic History of Sligo' is instructive as an example of the difficulty which historians of Irish journalism encounter when called upon to discuss 'new journalism'.

## AUTHOR

Mark Wehrly holds a PhD from NUI Maynooth. He currently teaches journalism in the University of Limerick. His research interests centre around the historical development of Irish local newspapers. Having previously worked as a journalist, he is combining his research and professional experience in the production of a local history documentary series for Ocean FM in Sligo.

<sup>7</sup> The *Sligo Nationalist* was closed in April 1920, and re-launched as the *Connachtman* on 5 May 1920 under the same editor, R.G. Bradshaw. See McTernan, 2000: 537.

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*Pall Mall Gazette*

*Sligo Nationalist*

*Sligo Star*

*Sligo Times*

*The Connachtman*

*The Sligo Champion*

## BOOK REVIEWS

B. O'Neill, M. Ala-Fossi, P. Jauert, S. Lax, L. Nyre and H. Shaw (eds), *Digital Radio in Europe: Technologies, Industries and Cultures*.

Bristol: Intellect, 2010. 248pp, £24.95 Stg. ISBN 978-184150-279-3

Rosemary Day, *Community Radio in Ireland; Participation and Multiflows*

New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2009. 209pp, €17.99 ISBN 978-577273-859-1

Pat Hannon

Drawing mostly from extensive cross-national research conducted by the Digital Radio Cultures in Europe research group (DRACE), this ambitious collection sets out over 11 chapters to explore the many facets of digital radio, and in doing so provides insightful contexts surrounding the technologies, policies and approaches behind the drive to make radio all digital.

In Chapter 1, O'Neill and Shaw give the background to the founding of the EBU (European Broadcasting Union) in 1950. From a project established in 1987, it was envisaged that the DAB signal would have the capacity to carry the primary audio of radio and more, such as text and pictures. Moreover, it was hoped that the standard would be adopted worldwide. This was not to be as Stavitsky and Huntberger outline in their chapter: The US chose to use the IBOC (In-Band, On-Channel) which works alongside the existing infrastructure. DAB was new from the ground up.

When BBC radio threw the switch on its first national DAB service in 1995, the then Managing Director of Radio, Liz Forgan, hailed it as a new dawn for radio and comparisons were made with the introduction of the compact disc. Market research projected that 50 million new DAB radio sets would be purchased over the following ten years. Alas, this never happened and the book explains why. Even as DAB went to air, it was already technically outdated. As O'Neill and Shaw write: 'The quest was never to find the best or most innovative neutral digital radio solution – it was, by the very nature of who framed the question, to find the best and most innovative digital radio solution which would serve the needs of the status quo – in this case the concept of European unity and ideology as led by the EBU and its network of public broadcasters' (p39).

O'Neill explains how, when DAB was being launched back in 1995, it was referred to as being 'CD quality' (when in fact it is MP2). This statement was to become DAB's Achilles heel as stations quickly reduced the bit rate to pack in more stations.

The book's focus is not solely on the technical aspects but also considers the wider cultural perspective with the analysis extending beyond the boundaries of Europe to include US and Canada. Shaw's chapter on 'The Online Transformation' is the book's most perceptive and reveals how the online and podcasting world are changing the consumption of radio's output. The standard linear schedule is broken down and time-shifting takes over. The iPod generation fillets the best bits of radio to be enjoyed as and when they want it. US broadcaster NPR is ahead of the curve as they synthesise what the web can offer and how people actually listen. There's a good discussion on where all this convergence is going to and a suggestion from Shaw that micropayments might be a way to cover the music rights that is the bane of all podcast producers – while listeners can now download the much loved Desert Island Discs, most of the music is removed 'for rights purposes'.

Reading this book gives one a solid grasp of what has been happening to make the oldest broadcast medium more fit for modern purpose. The editors may have had to include 'Europe' in the title to satisfy the funders, but it is actually a global perspective. There are inevitably small overlaps between some chapters. However, as most people will probably dip in and out of the book, this overlap is actually quite helpful. This is a 'must have' book for media students, radio researchers and lovers of radio alike.

Hallett even considers the challenges for community radio, offering useful context for assessing Rosemary Day's volume on the sector in Ireland. Part of the *EURICOM Monographs: Communicative Innovations and Democracy* series, Day's book is built upon original PhD research with longer-term observation and investigates six community radio stations spread across Ireland: DSCR, NEAR FM, WDAR (all in Dublin), CRY in Youghal, Co Cork, and CCR in Connemara.

Community radio has been around in Ireland since 1989 and some of the stations examined in the book can trace their roots back to pirate radio days. The author sets out to analyse how the six broadcasters compare against the concepts of community and its construction through communication; the role and meaning of public participation; and how they succeed, or not, in relation to the creation of 'multiflows' of communication.

The book establishes exactly what the community radio ideal actually is. Fundamental to the community media concept are participation by all, shared-ownership and above all, Day suggests, community building. Unlike public service and commercial stations, which are subject to the publication of quarterly listenership figures, community stations are not required to have any objective quantitative measurement system to establish who's listening and when. Day argues that such measures miss the point of community radio (p.180).

Day's previous book on community radio was a collection of the experiences of the programme makers in their own words (Day, 2007). This text is clearly concerned with the meaning of community and it is extremely helpful that the sometimes ambiguous term 'community' is explored in depth.

Reading the book gives one a true picture of how stations manage to empower marginalised groups. Moreover, in successful stations, the focus is on community building exercises over programming with high production values. Day makes no evaluating reference to the programming content of the stations. Many listeners tune in and never fully understand the concept behind the programming. Perhaps just the

sound of local voices is enough to entice them. The author suggests the stations could draw from a wider range of economic and social backgrounds to avoid sounding too focused on the marginalised and disadvantaged (p.71). The final chapter proposes an interesting framework against which the community radio stations can evaluate their own performance.

The author, who has a pedigree of involvement in the medium, has raised the bar in terms of establishing a theory to underpin the practice of community radio. The book illuminates how community radio can contribute to the democratic process and help build a pluralist society (p94). Although it is US-published, with the recent escalation of academic interest in Britain and the proliferation of community stations going on air, this text will be a welcome addition closer to home.

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### REVIEWER

Pat Hannon is a lecturer in the School of Media at Dublin Institute of Technology.

## Paschal Preston, *Making the News: journalism and news cultures in contemporary Europe*.

Oxon: Routledge, 2009. 185pp, £21.99 ISBN 978-0-415-46189-4

Nora French

A recent OECD report (2010) on the newspaper industry and the internet has shown a decline in revenue generated by newspaper publishers in the years 2007-2009 in most of its member countries, but the level of decline varies significantly – from a drop of 21 per cent and 20 per cent in the US and UK respectively to 2 per cent and 3 per cent in Austria and Australia. European countries figure at high, mid and low positions on the scale of the industry's decline, and therefore studies that focus on Europe – as this book does – have much to offer in understanding the trends of the industry as a whole.

Preston starts from the point of view that journalism is in flux; its dominant Anglo-Saxon model challenged. It seeks to provide a transEuropean perspective on the changing journalism landscape. It is based on an EU supported research project, 'Media and Ethics of the European Public Sphere from the Treaty of Rome to the "War on Terror"' (the 'eMEDIATE' project), of which Preston was coordinator. Two other members of the project team, Monika Metykove and Jacques Guyot, contribute in a more minor way to the publication. Primary research – involving interviews with senior European journalists – informs the book, which is a rich,

theoretically informed account of trends and issues in journalism and newsmaking in Europe in the early part of the twenty-first century.

The introductory first chapter offers a comprehensive rationale for the remainder of the book. Emphasis is placed on the multi-dimensional approach of the theoretical framework, using concepts taken from five main research perspectives used in journalism research, i.e. those based around: individual influences – the journalists themselves; media industry routines – institutional practices and norms; organisational influences; political economy factors – broader, macro-level influences; and finally, ‘the cultural air we breathe’ – cultural, ideological or symbolic power.

A second feature is Preston’s approach to the implications of new technologies for the media. This involves his looking at commonalities and differences between old and new media formats and balancing techno-centric and information society approaches. It is no surprise that this is a central issue given the author’s long-term research interest in communication technologies; the socio-economic and cultural aspects of such technologies; and the information society.

*Making the News* is distinguished by its cross-national nature. It uses literature and research sources from a variety of European countries, which is rare and which confronts the researcher with ‘many major practical, epistemological and value-laden challenges’ (p. 5).

The book is informed by a cross-national research study mainly based on in-depth interviews with 95 senior journalists from 11 different European countries. The research aims not only to identify general trends in journalism culture or cultures across the continent, but also to tackle the vexed question of whether an EU public sphere has come into being, especially as regards the reporting of issues related to the EU itself.

The second chapter gives an outline historical perspective on journalism in Europe – interestingly starting with the Roman Empire rather than with Gutenberg. Chapters 3 to 7 provide the core of the book, focusing on influences on the individual journalist and on media routines and practices (chapter 3); and institutional, organisational, political-economic and cultural factors (chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7). Chapter 8 considers audiences, while chapter 9 examines whether a European journalism culture and a European public sphere are emerging – finding little evidence that this is so.

The concluding chapter summarises the findings relating to key trends and issues in journalism and discusses how journalism needs to change. The commercial imperative rather than technology is seen as responsible for the current trends in news content and in employment conditions for journalists. Calls are made for a renewal of journalists’ commitment to serving the public interest, and at institutional level, a focus on the critical issue of resources. The book argues that this includes the need for new political and wider economic policies and regulations and concludes by advocating for the regulation of the media as it has now become a power in itself.

The book provides an unusually rich and in-depth account of the current state of journalism, one which comes from its focus on the continuities and changes in newsmaking. It eschews a focus on isolated, individual issues in favour of analysis of long-term trends and large-scale innovations in the industry.

It is particularly strong on the technological dimension. It reflects the author’s rejection of technological determinism, instead placing social, political, economic and



cultural influences at the heart of changes in journalism. This can be seen, for example, in his account of the historic development of journalism, which is traced back to the information gathering carried out for the needs of the Roman Empire, and continued and developed by the church and, in early modern times, the state of Venice, before the development of Gutenberg's printing press.

Unsurprisingly, given the theoretical frame adopted, the stronger sections of the book are chapters 3 to 7, which deal with the different layers of influence on making the news. The chapters on audiences and on European news culture do not tie in with the same approach and appear somewhat detached from the main argument of the book.

The chapter on audiences is written by Metykova rather than Preston, which may explain its lack of integration. Her statement that audiences underlie all sections of the book and that the public is the 'god' of journalism is not evident to the reader. The general tendency of journalists to distrust audience research is reiterated here, with Metykova providing interesting comparisons between the different experiences in Eastern and Western Europe, both of which have led to audience research being seen as delivering audiences to commercial interests rather than seeing it as necessary if journalism is to work in the public interest.

The chapter on journalism in Europe provides a useful summary of the current status of journalism within the EU and the persistent difficulty the EU has in communicating effectively with its citizens through the media. Theoretically, this topic is justified as exemplifying the globalisation of journalism. However, it could have been tied in with the five explanatory perspectives of the author's main argument by focusing on the influences of industrial routines, and the organisational, institutional, political and cultural factors at play in the reporting of Europe – see for example, Statham (2007).

Others have been more optimistic in finding an increased European dimension to reporting – an emerging European public sphere not acknowledged here (Pfetsch et al., 2008; Gleissner et al., 2005).

The book is based on making the news, indeed, the term 'newsmaking' is used frequently in place of 'journalism'. Such an approach has led to emphasis on the influences examined most closely by Preston – those related to the production of the news, whether at the level of the individual, the media organisation or larger corporation of which it is part, as well as the wider political, economic and cultural contexts in which journalists operate. There is no engagement with the readers, listeners or viewers.

In contrast, in calling for the renewal of journalism in his conclusion, the author first recommends a recommitment to serving the public interest, arguing that individual journalists should orient themselves towards the public. A focus on providing news rather than making it, in other words, where the purpose of newsmaking – to inform the public, to contribute to citizen engagement – is brought to the fore – would shift the orientation in the direction which Preston advocates. News provision, news dissemination, and news consumption can be added to newsmaking in this approach where the audience, in Metykova's words, would become 'the god term of journalism'.

Since Preston and his colleagues carried out their research, the severe global economic crisis has weakened the dominance of the liberal economic policies and neo-

conservatism which had led to the over-commercialism of journalism, the commodification of the news and the diminution of the professional autonomy of journalists along with other professionals. The current situation provides a more opportune context than Preston could have foreseen to rebuild a journalism better suited to serve the needs of society as a whole. The failure of journalism to investigate economic power as closely as political power is seen to have been a factor leading to the current financial and fiscal problems. Its renewal, driven by public rather than private or commercial interests, is one of the changes needed to safeguard against their recurrence.

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### REVIEWER

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## Christopher Morash, *A History of the Media in Ireland*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010. 244 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-84392-8 (hbk). No price stated.

John Horgan

There are huge problems attending an enterprise of this kind. Summarising the key developments of more than 450 years in a field as complex as media – let alone analysing them, evaluating them, or relating them to each other or to historiography in general – demands a breadth of knowledge and a grasp of detail that is granted to few mortals. To attempt it in fewer than 250 pages is high-wire stuff.

That Christopher Morash has succeeded to the extent that he does is attributable to a number of factors evidenced in the book itself. One is the sheer volume of old-fashioned, painstaking, academic leg-work he has put into it. There is hardly a page in the book that will not send the interested reader scurrying off in search of more detail from his sources. Thomas Davis's critique of the British action in Afghanistan (p. 82) has an astonishingly contemporary ring, enhanced when you consult the original in full. His sketches of the development of the railways, of the postal systems,

the telephone system, and of other aspects of media-related communications technology are deft, well-referenced and persuasive, even as he takes a firm stand against technological determinism and the idea that culture is overly dependent on technology (p. 4). Its general readability is enhanced by spiky, provocative but well-argued mini-theses, such as his analysis of the 1916 Rising as, in part, a 'media event' (p.127), which has echoes of Baudrillard.

Inevitably, there is a Procrustean aspect to the way in which he has distributed his evidence across a framework that combines cultural theory and 'mapping', elements of post-modernism, the Habermasian concept of the public sphere, and a number of other ingredients, and occasionally the evidence does not fit quite as neatly as he would wish it to. His assertion that the mediatisation of the Great Famine was significant (p.79), while buttressed by references to previous, unreported famines, does not address the problematic issue of why later famines (e.g. 1879) were not similarly mediated (except in the *Freeman's Journal*). His analysis of the growth and development of the nationalist regional press in late nineteenth century is well-illustrated, but there is – for this reader at least – a significant lacuna: the absence of any substantial treatment of the Unionist regional press south of what became the border with Northern Ireland, particularly as it existed in the larger urban centres and the garrison towns.

That said, this work is book-ended and thematised by two concepts which, although they do not and cannot explain everything, go a fair distance towards offering us a really useful and innovative lens through which to inspect the many and varied phenomena he brings to our attention. One is globalisation; the other is the concept of Ireland as an 'imagined space' (p. 4) in which newspapers like *The Nation* were able to 'give the idea of nationality the tangible form of a unified informational territory' (p. 82), which was 'waiting to be shaped by the right combination of printed words' (p. 119), and in which Ireland can be imagined 'as the confluence of information flows, as the nodal point around which books, newspapers, signal, sounds and images circulate' (p. 226).

Although these two concepts are, in Morash's work, interdependent, the globalisation one tends to work better as an explicator of what happened, why it happened, and how it happened. The particular strength of its application here is that it doesn't regard globalisation as something that began to happen the day before yesterday, if not even more recently, but traces its antecedents, in the field of media generally as well as in relation to media in Ireland, back through the centuries in a way that illuminates the contributions of media to globalisation and the contributions of globalisation to the development of media.

There is a sub-theme here that is touched on intermittently rather than explored. This is the role – and fate – of the Irish language. As he points out, the absence of a printed literature in Irish was significant: in the eighteenth century there were only 30 books in Irish in print (p. 42). And yet the fact that eight of these 30 titles were Bibles is an intriguing pointer to another aspect of our media history which has not received substantial treatment anywhere. This is the contrast between the enhanced survival of another Celtic language ostensibly much more vulnerable to the English overlordship than Irish – Welsh – because of its intensely important role in religion and worship in 19<sup>th</sup> century Wales, and the supine, acquiescent, and facilitatory attitude to English adopted (with some honourable and unsuccessful exceptions) by the

19<sup>th</sup> century authorities of the university of which Christopher Morash is currently such an adornment, and by the Irish Catholic Church generally in the same era. There is scope for a very useful PhD here, to say the least.

Indeed, the links between language, culture, and the conceptualisation of national identity are tantalisingly hinted at, in terms which also have a distinctly contemporary ring, in James Arbuckle's complaint in the first issue of the *Dublin Weekly Journal* in 1725 (p. 44):

If a good piece happens at any Time to be wrote among ourselves, there is scarce One in Ten will vouchsafe it a Reading, unless it be made Authentick by being Printed in London. Thus, our Brains being Manufactured Abroad, become an Expence to the Nation: and we are forced to make a purchase of our own Wit and Learning, which hereby are made hurtful to the Native Soil.

If the concept of Ireland as an "imagined space" is more problematic as an analytical tool, it is less because of the fluency and persuasiveness with which Morash utilises it than because of the inevitable definitional difficulties involved. There is always the risk that, like the bemused courtiers in *Hamlet*, who tried to humour the testy prince of Denmark by varying their descriptions of a cloud (it was, they averred, "backed like a weasel", or "very like a whale"), anyone who uses it will endow it with a flexibility that ends up impairing its potency.

Morash does a fine job, however, of giving it as much specificity as, I think, it can bear, and in the process forces us to re-examine not only two-dimensional approaches to historiography and the development of media, but the traditional (and still useful) tension between agency and structure as explanations, and occasionally determinants, of human behavior. In all of this, too, his insights into technology and its role are a fascinating and often useful adjunct to his concept of the imagined space. The book itself is such a miracle of compression that there are starting points for potential PhDs on almost every other page.

There are glitches here and there, but drawing detailed attention to them in a review would be unfair and petty in the face of such research, such adventurous treatment of themes and concepts, and such a passionate dedication to explication, illumination, and to the fascinating, complex history of media in Ireland. In a world bedevilled by reductionist, simplistic and axe-grinding hypotheses about media, this is a valuable, scholarly, highly readable, challenging and deeply thoughtful exploration of the many and subtle ways in which media are both constitutive of, and shaped by, the human context in which they manifest themselves.

## REVIEWER

John Horgan, Emeritus Professor, School of Communications, DCU, Press Ombudsman.

## ICR Notes for Contributors

*Irish Communications Review* is published by Dublin Institute of Technology within the Centre for Media Research, School of Media. It provides a forum in Ireland for research, analysis and discussion of all matters relating to media communications on all media platforms and including broadcasting, film, the internet, journalism, public relations, advertising, media education and media technologies. Studying the media within their cultural, economic, political and historical contexts, it seeks to encourage the exchange of ideas and experiences, and to present information on new developments relevant to the field.

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*Irish Communications Review* welcomes articles on all aspects of the media in Ireland or with relevance to Ireland from academic researchers and media practitioners. Articles may comprise research reports and analyses from diverse theoretical and methodological approaches in all fields as well as reviews, review essays and shorter research notes and commentaries. Contributors should submit brief proposals before submitting completed articles. Contributions must not have been published elsewhere. Where there are multiple authors, a letter confirming that all have agreed to the submission should be included.

All articles will be referred for blind review before final acceptance. *Irish Communications Review* adheres to a rigorous double-blind reviewing policy in which the identity of both the reviewer and author are always concealed from both parties.

### Format for submission:

The article should be submitted electronically in Microsoft Word or RTF format to [icr@dit.ie](mailto:icr@dit.ie).

Please include with it a letter confirming that the article is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere.

The article should contain a title page with full title and any sub-title. To facilitate blind reviewing, a separate page should list the name of each author, with affiliation, contact details and brief biographic note.

An abstract of approximately 150 words should be provided and up to 10 key words.

Full articles should be 7,000 words maximum in length and reviews approximately 1,500 words.

Texts should be clearly organised using headings and sub-headings where appropriate. Quotations longer than 40 words should be indented in the text.

A clear readable style should be used with British spelling. For punctuation, use single quotation marks with double quotes inside single quotes. Dates should be in the form: 30 November, 2008.

References should follow the Harvard style with references in the text given as: (author, date: page) and an alphabetic reference section at the end of the article. Please consult previous editions of the journal at: [www.icr.dit.ie](http://www.icr.dit.ie) for examples of the style.

Footnotes/endnotes should be used sparingly for substantive material which would be distracting in the main text. They should be numbered in superscript and listed at the end of the text before the references.

Tables should be in a separate file with their position indicated by a note in the text. They should be numbered consecutively and have clear captions.

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Combative Critics or Captured Collaborators? Irish Financial Journalism and the End of the Celtic Tiger

*D.Fahy, M. O'Brien and Valerio Poti*

*Irish Press* coverage of the Troubles in the North from 1968 to 1995

*Ray Burke*

Peering through the Fog: American Newspapers and the Easter Rising

*Robert Smuhl*

Crossing Boundaries and Early Gleanings of Cultural Replacement in Irish Periodical Culture

*Regina Uí Chollatáin*

A Protestant Paper for a Protestant People: the Irish Times and the southern Ireland minority

*Ian d'Alton*

Tabloid Sensationalism or Revolutionary Feminism: the first-wave feminist movement in an Irish women's periodical

*Sonja Tiernan*

'To Enlighten and Entertain' – Adventure narrative in the *Our Boys* paper

*Michael Flanagan*

'Blessed with the faculty of mirthfulness': Arthur Malley, the 'new journalism' and the local press in Sligo at the turn of the twentieth century

*Mark Wehrly*

## Reviews

Brian O'Neill (ed.), *Digital Radio in Europe: Technologies, Industries and Cultures*

Rosemary Day, *Community Radio in Ireland: Participation and Multiflows of Communication*

*Pat Hannon*

Paschal Preston, *Making the News: journalism and news cultures in contemporary Europe*

*Nora French*

Chris Morash, *History of the Media in Ireland*

*John Horgan*

